THE TEXAS QUESTION AS A FACTOR IN THE SECTIONAL STRUGGLE

THESIS

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By

Edwin Dale Odom, B. A.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE ........................................................................................................ iv

Chapter

I. THE ORIGIN OF THE TEXAS QUESTION: ........................................... 1
II. ANNEXATION REJECTED. ................................................................. 35
III. FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT AND RE-EMERGENCE .............. 52
IV. PARTY POLITICS AND THE TEXAS TREATY. ...................... 74
V. THE ELECTION OF 1844: MANIFEST DESTINY OR SECTIONALISM? .......... 92
VI. THE TRIUMPH OF MANIFEST DESTINY. ...................................... 113

BIBLIOGRAPHY. ....................................................................................... 128
The question of Texas annexation was considered by contemporaries as one of the most vital issues ever to confront the United States. Once consummated, the Texas question was lost in the controversy roused by the Mexican War and the consequent struggle over the issue of the expansion of slavery. However, for many years afterward, the argument raged as to whether or not the project to add Texas to the Union was an attempt by Southern slaveholders to expand and enhance the institution of slavery. Since the turn of the century historians have been inclined to take a more unbiased look at the annexation question and have generally concluded that the annexation of Texas, though advocated at times for sectional reasons, was really only a part of the great expansion movement by the United States which intermittently, but steadily, prevailed for more than a century after independence was established. Had sectional jealousy and bitterness not been present, Texas would have come into the Union some nine years earlier than it did. There might have been war with Mexico at that time, but it would have been a war less fraught with sectional significance.

If the Texas question is considered to be an integral part of manifest destiny, there still remains unanswered the question of how much, and in what way, the controversial Texas question influenced the sectional struggle.
The Texas question could have been an important factor in causing sectional animosity, or it could have been only a symptom of sectional bitterness already present; it could also have been a combination of both. As one might suspect, there is no simple, clear-cut answer.

This thesis is an attempt to study the Texas question in its setting with particular emphasis on the sectional ramifications of the issue. It is not an attempt to document the diplomatic negotiations which led to annexation. It is not an attempt to prove that it was the Texas issue which irreconcilably divided the North and South, but it is an effort to assess the importance of the Texas question as a factor in the sectional struggle, by studying the origin, struggle, and climax of the effort to annex Texas to the United States. The chief concern here is with politics and sectionalism in the United States in the years, 1835-1846, and the way in which they affected, or were affected by the question of Texas annexation. Only incidentally, and insofar as they affect the matter under consideration, is there any concern with affairs and events in Texas.
CHAPTER I

THE ORIGIN OF THE TEXAS QUESTION

That land north of Mexico, bordering the Gulf of Mexico, and lying on the southwestern border of the United States played a part in the course of affairs of the United States for over half of the nineteenth century. Just how much that block of land that came to be known as Texas influenced American affairs is difficult to measure, but it must be concluded that from the time of Phillip Nolan's hopeless filibuster in the year 1800, Texas remained in the back of the minds of many restless, ambitious and adventurous Americans. Phillip Nolan, Aaron Burr, August Magee, Bernardo Gutierrez, James Long, and the men who plotted, dreamed, and acted with them were adventurers, but they also should be regarded as representative of an era, and a nation; an eager, ambitious, confident, and aggressive nation. These men, however, were not builders, only dreamers, and as such were not to accomplish as much as were the more cautious and substantial element which succeeded them. However, those who followed them were only a little more cautious and conservative, and just as confident and ambitious.

In order to see the way in which the question of Texas became a major political problem in the United States in
the 1830's and 1840's, it is necessary to trace the development of American interest in Texas. As a fertile field for adventurers Texas first began to be of significance to the United States. In the year 1800, when the United States had no vestige of a claim on Texas, an adventurer named Phillip Nolan organized an expedition into Texas. His twenty-one man force left Natchez for Texas ostensibly to trap wild horses, but the Spanish Garrison at Nacogdoches broke up the expedition after Nolan's men had begun catching wild horses and had established themselves on the Brazos River.

In 1803 the United States began its course of gigantic land appropriations with the purchase of the Louisiana territory. Napoleon's negotiators led Livingston and Monroe to believe that the land known as Texas could be made a part of the Louisiana transaction with a minimum of effort. True, most Americans at that time were more concerned with the acquisition of Florida, than Texas, but Aaron Burr and James Wilkinson were planning to make Texas the stepping stone for an acquired Spanish empire. Burr's expedition never got far past the planning stage, but in 1812 another group went much further. Augustus Magee, a former lieutenant in the United States army, and Bernardo Gutierrez, a Mexican liberal, led an army of considerable size into Texas in that

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1 Texas Almanac, 1868, pp. 60-64, cited in Hubert H. Bancroft, The North Mexican States and Texas (San Francisco, 1889), 11, 15-19.
year. Their force consisted of about three thousand men at most, about eight hundred of whom were Anglo-Americans, while the remainder were Mexicans and Indians. Gutierrez and Magee thought to take advantage of Spain's troubles in Europe with Napoleon's occupation army, to throw off the Spanish hold on Texas, and perhaps Mexico as well. Their army met with some initial success, capturing Bexar (San Antonio), the most important Spanish stronghold in Texas, but it was decisively defeated and scattered on the Medina River below San Antonio.²

It is true that the United States would probably have been successful in gaining control of Texas at this time had the government chosen to openly assert its claims to Texas, but it chose not to do so, even though no claims were disavowed. It is also true that Spain was taken aback by the sale of Louisiana to the United States, because she did not relish her as a next door neighbor. A big factor in the failure of the Gutierrez and Magee expedition was Spain's determination to maintain Texas as a buffer state peopled with Indians unfriendly to American expansion, and garrisoned with Spanish soldiers.³


Actually, very few people in the United States were much interested in Texas before 1820. Even the attempted expeditions into Texas were mainly for the purpose of making Texas and Mexico independent of Spain, even if the participants did have visions of having a great deal of influence in the new independent country. They were not particularly intended to add any territory to the United States. However, the United States government was very much interested in acquiring Spanish territory on the east side of the Mississippi River. Florida was a constant source of friction between the two countries, and the situation rapidly got out of hand in the years immediately following the war of 1812. To some extent, due to Andrew Jackson's exploits in Florida in 1817, Spain decided she must relinquish Florida or have it taken, but at the same time the Spanish government attempted to bolster her claim on Texas by insisting that the United States renounce any claim they might have on it as a result of the Louisiana Purchase. When the treaty, purchasing Florida and renouncing all claims on Texas, was concluded in February of 1819, it received the warm approval of the press as well as the United States Congress. 4

There were however, some voices raised against the proceedings, particularly in the West. The redoubtable Thomas Hart Benton from the Missouri territory blasted the

4 Thomas Hart Benton, Thirty Years View (Boston, 1854), I, p. 16.
trade in the St. Louis newspapers. Benton insisted that the United States could have had Texas as well, and that it was due to the presidential ambitions of the Southern men in Monroe's cabinet that the government did not take as much as Spain offered. Benton contended that the Missouri controversy raging at that time so alarmed the presidential aspirants in the cabinet that they gave away Texas so it could never become an issue which might subvert party lines and throw the country into turmoil over the extension of slavery. He decided that this must be the case after he had received the inside information on the proceedings. He pointed out that even Andrew Jackson consented to the treaty as a temporary measure to allay the fears of the Northeast over the westward spread of slave power. John Quincy Adams, Monroe's Secretary of State, was also reluctant to renounce claims on Texas, and in 1820 Henry Clay attacked the treaty, largely for political reasons. A good sized minority group was opposed to the treaty by the time Spain ratified it in October of 1820, which was past the six-month time limit set for approval, and many were the arguments raised against it before the treaty was approved by Congress a second time. Throughout the two years in which the treaty was hanging fire, many newspapers, particularly in the New Orleans area,

5 Ibid., p. 17.

6 Bancroft, p. 47.
deplored the fact that the United States was giving Texas away, and even then, opened the argument that Texas was destined to be a part of the United States, to come into the Union as a state. 7

In the Natchez, Mississippi, area another filibuster attempt was organized by men who did not believe Texas should belong to Spain. An expedition led by James Long, a former Virginia physician, proceeded to Nacogdoches and there proclaimed Texas a republic. Their group at its largest, amounted to only three hundred men, but they fortified posts on the Trinity and Brazos Rivers and at Nacogdoches, and attempted to put a government into operation. The feeble republic did not last long. A force of seven hundred Spanish regulars came up, defeated, and sent scurrying back across the Sabine each of the garrisons of Long's small army. Long barely escaped with his life, but retired to New Orleans and joined another expedition aimed at revolutionizing Mexico. This expedition was also quite futile, and the participants were captured and imprisoned. The success of the Mexicans in gaining their independence in 1821 caused Long and his fellows to be released, but in the following year Long was assassinated by his former friends in Mexico. 8


8 Bancroft, pp. 48-52.
The successful Mexican revolution brought Texas under the control of the new Mexican republic, a government which thought for a time that its country had much in common with the people of the United States of the North. This sentiment led to Mexican continuation of a policy begun by Spain in 1820 of granting lands to American businessmen who contracted to settle families of Americans on Texas lands.

As American immigrants began to move into Texas in the 1820's and early 1830's, the United States government under the administration of John Q. Adams began attempts to purchase Texas from the poor, but proud Mexican government. Joel R. Poinsett, a South Carolinian, had been appointed minister to Mexico by Adams. In 1825 Secretary of State Henry Clay wrote Poinsett that there might be trouble over the Sabine as a boundary, because it was too close to New Orleans. Clay instructed Poinsett to sound the Mexican government as to establishing a new boundary at the Brazos, Colorado, or perhaps the Rio Grande. In March, 1827, Poinsett was instructed to offer one million dollars for recognition of the Rio Grande as the boundary. The Mexican government refused, and would not even take up negotiations for a treaty of amity and commerce between the two countries unless it had an article reaffirming the terms of the treaty

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with Spain of 1819, leaving the boundary at the Sabine.  

Such a treaty of amity and commerce was concluded in 1828, reaffirming the boundary of Texas at the Sabine, although it was not ratified by the Senate, largely because of President Jackson's desire to keep open negotiations to buy Texas. Jackson, after a treaty of the same type was ratified in 1832, introduced the claim that the Neches River, which branches from the Sabine a few miles above the Gulf of Mexico and flows farther west, was the real Sabine. This claim would have given the United States two populous counties of east Texas and would have kept the boundary dispute open, thereby giving the minister to Mexico, then Anthony Butler, a chance to continue trying to negotiate for Texas. The Mexican officials who were to help mark out the boundary never did appear, allowing the region between the Neches and Sabine Rivers to become the subject of much controversy later.

After Jackson had been elected president, Poinsett was sent instructions in August of 1829 to try to buy as much of Texas as Mexico would cede, and authorizing him to pay as much as five million dollars for recognition of the Rio Grande

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10 Bancroft, p. 90.

11 Jackson to Colonel Anthony Butler, February 25, 1832, John S. Bassett, ed., Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, IV (Washington, 1931), 409.
boundary. Poinsett never received these instructions however, because the Mexican government had demanded his recall, because of his meddling in the internal affairs of the government.

Anthony Butler, a Mississippian who had a large stake in Texas affairs, was appointed minister to Mexico by Jackson, to replace Poinsett. For six years he used bribery, threats, and diplomacy in an attempt to acquire Texas for the United States. Butler alternately wrote hopeful and discouraging letters to Jackson concerning his progress toward the purchase of Texas. Jackson eagerly encouraged him in his efforts at first, but grew increasingly cautious as events progressed. Butler on occasion would urge Jackson to send an army into Texas to show the Mexican government that he meant business and could take Texas if he wanted to do so.  

The machinations of Poinsett and Butler, combined with the growing disregard of Mexican laws by the colonists in Texas, had a sobering effect on the Mexicans. They became increasingly fearful of American designs on Texas. Mexico began to see the Texans as the vanguard of an invasion.

12 For a good view of the changing of Jackson's stand on the matter and the methods used by Butler see letters from Butler to Jackson and Jackson to Butler in Correspondence of Jackson, Vols. IV and V.

13 Colonel Anthony Butler to Jackson, February 6, 1834, ibid., V, 244.
force, and tried to repair its mistake. Too late, it began to try to govern Texas and stop the flood of American immigration.

An initial area of conflict arose over the institution of slavery. Most of the colonists in Texas were from southern states and had brought the institution with them. The Mexicans, on the other hand, had developed their own brand of slavery—peonage, so Mexico abolished negro slavery throughout its states in September, 1829, by decree of President Guerrero. A storm of protest caused Texas to be excepted, however, by another decree three months later. There seems to have been little conflict between the Texans and Mexicans over slavery, as was claimed in northern anti-slavery arguments later, although there were laws governing the introduction of slaves into Mexico and the buying and selling of slaves which were generally disregarded by the Texas colonists.

It was mainly the garrisoning of several forts by Mexican soldiers, who attempted to enforce customs and tax laws and the law of 1830 banning further colonists from the United States, which triggered the conflict between the


Texans and the Mexicans. Actually, this revision of Mexican policy came about largely as a result of the growing fear of encroachment of the United States on Mexican territory.

In 1832 a series of desultory armed conflicts broke out in Texas which continued intermittently until mid-1836, although there were longer periods of peace and quiet than there were of fighting. Of course, Santa Anna's tyranny and his utter disregard of the Constitution of the Mexican government in centralizing the government in 1835 led to the Texas Declaration of Independence and the consequent revolutionary war against Mexico. This cause cannot be completely discredited, nor can it be completely credited. At least in the early stages, there were those among Texas leaders who were sincerely fighting for their rights as Mexican citizens, but there were others who were more akin to those early adventurers and filibusterers into Texas.

One of the latter was the hero of San Jacinto, Sam Houston. Houston was charged with having designs on Texas as early as 1829, after his wife had left him and he had gone to Port Gibson in the Arkansas territory. It was said that he planned to raise an army, join forces with theTexans, wrest Texas from Mexico, and set up a great western empire with himself as ruler. While he was at Port Gibson, Houston

16 Wharton, p. 85.

received a letter from Thomas Hart Benton. Benton wrote that he was sending him two articles written about the southwestern boundary, and added that "this subject, and the public lands, are the two levers to move public sentiment in the West. If you have ulterior views, your tongue and pen should dwell incessantly upon these two great topics." 18

What Benton meant by ulterior views is not entirely clear. He could possibly have had in mind the idea that Houston was intending to again enter politics, or perhaps rumors of Houston's plans for Texas had reached him.

The rumors of Houston's schemes for Texas are almost, but not quite substantiated by Houston's correspondence in the years 1832-1835 with James Prentiss, a land speculator from New York, whom Houston represented in land deals in Texas. 19 The vague and circuitous language used by the two men in their correspondence is quite suspicious, to say the least. Houston did go to Texas in 1833, and interested himself in the Indians and affairs there, as well as acting as land agent for Prentiss' New York agency. 20 In December, 1834,

18 Benton to Houston, August 15, 1829, ibid., I, 140.

19 See letters from Houston to Prentiss and Prentiss to Houston, The Writings of Sam Houston, I, 197-206, 225-274.

20 Houston to Jackson, February 13, 1833, ibid., I, 262.
a British traveler going through a small village in the southwest part of the Arkansas territory expressed suspicion of Houston's group. 21

General Houston was here, leading a mysterious sort of life, shut up in a small tavern. . . . I had been in communication with too many persons of late, and had seen too much passing before my eyes, to be ignorant that this little place was the rendezvous where a deeper game than faro or rouge-et-noir was playing. There were many persons at this time in the village from the states lying adjacent to the Mississippi, under the pretense of purchasing government lands, but whose real object was to encourage the settlers of Texas to throw off their allegiance to the Mexican government. Many of these individuals were personally acquainted with me. . . .

All in all, plenty of circumstantial evidence exists to connect Houston with plans to bring about a revolution in Texas.

There have been attempts to link Jackson with Houston in his schemes, as well as attempts to exonerate him. An article by Richard Stenberg deserves some notice in this connection. 22 Stenberg proves to his own satisfaction that Jackson was in collusion with Houston as early as 1830. Indeed, had the plan, which he concludes was worked out by the two men in 1834, succeeded, the United States would have


gone to war with Mexico in 1836 rather than 1846. At any rate, it has been proved that Jackson was warned of Houston's schemes as early as 1830 by Robert Mayo in a letter to Jackson. Mayo had become acquainted with Houston in Washington earlier, where Mayo said that Houston offered him a surgeon-generalship in his proposed Texas army. President Jackson on receiving Mayo's letter wrote a letter to William Fulton, Secretary of the Arkansas Territory, and a close friend of Jackson's, to be on guard against plotters there. This letter to Fulton has been used to exonerate Jackson from conniving with Houston as well as to indict him.


24 Stenberg, p. 234.

25 Jackson to Fulton, December 10, 1830, Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, IV, 212.

26 Eugene C. Barker, "President Jackson and the Texas Revolution," American Historical Review, XII (July, 1907), 788-309. In this article Barker completely exonerates Jackson, hinging his argument on the assertion that Jackson actually mailed the letter to Fulton in 1830. It would take more time than can be given here to develop the ramifications of this controversy. The circumstances are briefly: Jackson returned Mayo's letter of 1830 to him in 1836 along with the Fulton letter. The Jackson to Fulton letter had "copy" marked on the back. Mayo disregarded the word "copy" and thought no letter had been sent, and that Jackson allowed Houston to go on plotting while he kept silent. At least John Q. Adams agreed with him and the whole affair aroused much controversy in 1838. Most historians have agreed that Jackson sent the letter, which did show he was interested in preserving neutrality, but Stenberg writes that the letter marked "copy" was the original, and never
Jackson was involved in a conspiracy will probably never be conclusively proved, but there can be little doubt that he was personally in sympathy with almost any plan that would bring Texas into the Union.

For many years afterward, Northerners repeated the charges that the Texas revolution was the work of Southern slaveholders for the purpose of expanding slavery. However, in 1835 and 1836 many people, both North and South, were charging that the revolution was the work of land speculators. The Charleston Courier in 1836 expressed a similar belief: "Speculation produced war and will follow peace." It is certainly true that many prominent Texas leaders were heavily engaged in land speculation in Texas. William H. Wharton, a Texas leader and later Texas minister to the United States, along with M. B. Lamar, David G. Burnet and

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26 continued mailed, since it has erasures and corrections, even in style. He thinks that a copy of this letter was probably mailed, but three years later. His contention is backed by the fact that Fulton produced the letter only after much prompting from Jackson and no reply was ever produced, although Fulton announced later that he had found copies of some replies but they were unfit for publication due to their condition. Also Fulton and Jackson disagreed on the number of replies which Fulton had written Jackson on the matter; Jackson claimed one reply, Fulton several. For further evidence adduced by Stenberg see Stenberg's article "Jackson's Neches Claim," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXIX (April, 1936), 255-274.

27 Congressional Debates, 24th Congress, 1st Session, p. 3730.

numerous other prominent Texans had extensive land holdings in Texas, the value of which was considerably enhanced as a result of the revolution. Land speculation played its part along with other factors in causing the revolution.  

Not only were the motives of some of the leaders in the Texas revolt questionable, but even the motives of those who followed them were not all idealistic. There were, according to one estimate, only fifty native Texans in Houston's army of 800. The remainder were volunteers from the United States. Even a large part of Fannin's martyrs at Goliad, and Travis and Bowie's command at the Alamo, were volunteers from New Orleans and Mobile. Why did these men come to the aid of Texas? There were, of course, many reasons, but the following incident will amusingly serve to point out why many of them came. A battalion on its way to Texas was marching through a small village in Alabama with a flag flying, inscribed, "Texas and Liberty." Some cynic remarked that it should read "Texas, liberty and land." There are

29 For an account of Texans involved in land speculation see Elgin Williams, The Animating Pursuits of Speculation (New York, 1949).


other interesting factors contributing to the Texas revolution, but it is sufficient to say that the entire blame for the Texas revolt cannot be placed on Santa Anna and his policies.

The Texas question almost brought the United States into war with Mexico in 1836 due to the actions of the American government in sending General Gaines into Texas. The movements of Gaines on the southwestern border of the country are quite controversial. According to the treaty signed in 1832 between the United States and Mexico, each country was to restrain the Indians within its borders and keep them from raiding citizens on either side of the boundary. Late in 1835 there were many rumors that the Indians were going to rise. The alarms which spread in late 1835 and throughout 1836 were mostly unfounded, and in fact in the light of all evidence, almost preposterous, and can but have appeared so to those who knew something about the situation. However, there were many residents of east Texas, mostly women and children, who fled to the protection of Gaines' army on the east bank of the Sabine. Ethan Allan Hitchcock, an officer in General Gaines' army concluded that "the unfounded alarms had been started for one of three purposes--perhaps for all: speculators wished to purchase property at a reduced price; vagabonds wished to plunder abandoned habitations; and a band of political intriguers wished to make an occasion for General Gaines to march into Texas." There

have been other explanations offered as well, but at any rate, Gaines did march into Texas taking up his position at Nacogdoches in mid-July of 1836. Once there, Gaines was zealous in stopping Indians from going into Texas to make war on the Texans but not overly zealous in stopping Americans from going to the aid of Texas. The Mexican minister to the United States, Gorostiza, vigorously protested the movement of Gaines to Nacogdoches and pleaded to know what line would be considered the farthest a Mexican army should follow the Texans. He begged to know how the American army would treat the Texans if they retreated to its protection. There is no record that the American Secretary of State, John Forsyth, ever gave Gorostiza an answer on these specific points. Indeed, he did not even promise that Gaines' army would try to restrain American citizens from joining the Texans. After

34 Stenberg in both of his articles cited above uses Jackson's orders to Gaines to move as far as Nacogdoches in order to restrain the Indians, coupled with Houston's stubborn policy of retreat eastward and refusal to fight until forced by his soldiers, as further proof that there was an understanding between Houston and Jackson. He maintains that Houston intended to retreat to the disputed territory, where some minor skirmish between Mexican and United States troops would bring the United States into the war against Mexico. It might have worked, too, had not Houston's army practically forced him to make the attack at San Jacinto.

35 Hitchcock, p. 104.

36 Gorostiza to Forsyth, April 4, 1836, Congressional Globe and Appendix, 24th Congress, 1st Session, Ill, 374.
Gaines moved into Texas in July, strained relations led Gorostiza to demand his passport and withdraw from the United States, after sending an inflammatory pamphlet to the State Department charging the United States government with many breaches of neutrality. Gorostiza withdrew from Washington in September, 1836, and four months later the American minister to Mexico, Powhatan Ellis, withdrew from that country. Many incidents, particularly at sea, severely strained relations between the two governments throughout 1836 and 1837, and it seemed only a matter of time until they would go to war.

Despite the many charges to the contrary, the United States government apparently maintained a limited neutrality. The government considered its duty to be only to stop bands of men from taking up arms against Mexico on United States soil. But even this could not be enforced very well, for most of the government's agents were in sympathy with the cause of the Texans. An event which is illustrative of this condition occurred in the Nashville, Tennessee, area. A certain Captain Grundy heard that a group were arming and laying in supplies to go to Texas. Grundy told them it was illegal and that to see that they did not take up arms on


United States soil he would escort them to the southwestern border, and perhaps while there take a peek at Texas himself. Captain Grundy was the United States prosecuting attorney for that district and under government orders to arrest and prosecute such plotters. In general, the people of the United States did not expect their government to interfere in the conflict, but most of them considered it their duty individually to aid the Texans in their struggle against tyranny. Indeed, many were the public meetings held in cities all over the country to raise money to buy supplies and to plead for volunteers to go to Texas.

In the first stages of the Texas revolution events seem to tie the Texas question in with "Manifest Destiny." The opposition to interference in the affairs of Texas in 1835, as well as can be discerned, was not particularly on a North-South sectional basis, nor was sympathy for the cause of Texas confined to Southern states. Instead the independence of Texas became almost a national project. Most of the interest in Texas on the part of people in the United States between 1820 and 1835 had been confined to land speculators and


40 Winston, p. 323.
settlers in search of good free land, and there seems to be little or no evidence to support the contention that the Texas revolution was a conspiracy to extend slave territory. Indeed, throughout the next ten years there was never more than a small, but noisy, minority of pro-slavery advocates of annexation merely to gain more territory for slavery. Events moved rapidly, however, after 1835 to bring Texas into the eyes of the nation. Almost everyone in the United States from the first, followed affairs in Texas with a great deal of sympathy. The massacres at Goliad and the Alamo served to inflame public opinion against Mexico and in favor of the Texans even more. Memorials and petitions poured in from public meetings in cities all over the country asking Congress to recognize the independence of Texas even when such a recognition would likely have meant war with Mexico. Many legislators were carried along on the wave of public opinion. Senator Thomas Hart Benton speaking in the Senate when the Mexicans seemed to be on their way to triumph, and a conflict between American troops under General Gaines and the Mexicans in pursuit of the Texans seemed not beyond possibility, said: "... while neutrality is the obvious line of our duty and of our interest, yet there may be emergencies in which the obligation of duty can have no

41 De Voto, p. 13.

42 Benton, p. 665.
force, and the calculations of interest can have no place; when in fact, a man should have no head to think! nothing but a heart to feel! and an arm to strike!" He illustrated this sentiment by describing the massacres at Goliad and the rumors of horrors perpetrated on prisoners by the Mexicans, almost in the hearing of an American army, adding that such barbarism should not be allowed when Americans could stop it. Texans stimulated the tide of public opinion by appeals such as the following: "Our cause is that of Liberty, religious toleration, and Freedom of conscience against Usurpation, Despotism, and the Unnatural and Unholy Monopolies of the Church of Rome." On such an exaggerated moral plane many congressmen, newspaper editors, and Texas representatives appealed to the people of the United States to gain support for Texas.

Texans were undoubtedly wise to couch the terms of the struggle in such emotional and moral language rather than appealing to economic interests as they could have done, and did do to a certain extent. The Mexican Foreign Minister, Monasterio, wrote John Forsyth that the Texans would not have

43 Congressional Globe and Appendix, 24th Congress, 1st session, III, 510.

44 Austin and Archer to Colonel T. D. Owings, January 18, 1836, D. C. T., I, 60.

45 Winston, p. 334.
rebelled had they not expected help from land speculators in the United States. Also, the first Texas representatives on their way to Washington in January of 1836 wrote that they had negotiated a loan to Texas which was calculated to increase interest and activity in the cause of Texas.

Mexico was considered by most people in the United States to be a decadent ill-governed country, not able to govern Anglo-Americans who were accustomed to a higher level of statecraft under the government of the United States. In speeches in Congress, in newspaper articles, in pamphlets, and in speeches at public meetings, praising the Texans and castigating Mexico and Mexican institutions, imperialism and pride in American institutions were exhibited. This pride was a part of the feeling on the part of Americans that they had a duty, or a destiny to extend their form of government and their industrious and ingenious people from the Atlantic to the Pacific, if not over the whole of the Western Hemisphere. About the only notes of disagreement on this public-spirited feeling came from the older and more conservative states of the Atlantic seaboard, both North and South.

46 Monasterio to Forsyth, October 29, 1835, Congressional Globe and Appendix, 24th Congress, 1st session, III, 375.

47 Austin, Archer, and Wharton to Smith, January 10, 1836, P. O. T., I, 55.
Whether those arguments against the extension of American territory westward were the cause, or the result, of the development of anti-slavery opposition to the recognition and annexation of Texas is difficult to discover. It is true, however, that the injection of the slavery argument into the Texas question tended to weld the South together in favor of the admission of Texas, while it helped to make the Northeast almost completely opposed.

Before the injection of the slavery issue into the Texas question, and indeed, to some extent throughout the next ten years of controversy over annexation, conservatism was, in general, the key to opposition to the project. In the first session of the twenty-fourth Congress in early 1836 many Northern, and even abolitionist Senators, favored the recognition of Texas, while the Louisiana Senators, as well as other conservative Southern Senators were opposed. Throughout the next ten years, the majority of the Whigs, generally recognized to be the party of wealth and conservatism, was opposed to the annexation of Texas.

It is true that in the beginning of the Texas struggle for independence almost everyone was in sympathy with the Texans, but as soon as Houston's army gained the victory at San Jacinto and it began to look as if Texas might really

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48 Congressional Debates, 24th Congress, 1st session, pp. 1141-1143.
become independent, opposition to further interest in Texas affairs began to develop quite rapidly. An important factor in causing the growth of the opposition were inflammatory and extremist speeches by Southern members of Congress. Senator Robert J. Walker, of Mississippi, in May of 1836, presented a resolution for recognition of the Texas government as soon as official notice should be received showing that a \textit{de facto} government existed.\textsuperscript{49} Senators Preston and Calhoun of South Carolina went even further in stating that recognition should be soon and that annexation should be effected at the same time. All three men were defiantly defensive on the question of slavery and regarded the annexation of Texas as a project to protect slavery.\textsuperscript{50} In fact, their speeches disclose the basis of the persistent charge that the campaign to annex Texas was a conspiracy to extend slave territory.

Other members of the Senate who spoke on the resolution, deplored the re-opening of the slavery question in Congress. Calhoun was especially criticized by both friends and foes of Texas for linking recognition with annexation. Northern, as well as other Southern senators, counseled caution on recognition, and attempted to make it very clear that they approved a resolution to recognize a \textit{de facto} government of Texas when it could be officially ascertained

\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 1527.
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 1531.
that one existed. Such recognition, however, would not necessarily mean agreement with Walker, Calhoun, and Preston nor complete approval of Texans. 

As late as December, 1836, most congressmen seemed to favor recognition of Texas, but not annexation. They favored recognition largely because they believed Texas to be in fact independent. However, annexation would involve considerable difficulty with Mexico. And, as it developed, recognition held a similar problem, for the administration in the spring of 1837 insisted for a time that Texas gain recognition elsewhere so the United States would not be put in a bad light before the rest of the world. The United States was in the embarrassing position of being suspected of having aided and encouraged the Texans in their revolt. Hasty recognition would add to the grounds for suspicion.

Opposition to the annexation of Texas continued to grow throughout 1836 and 1837. Abolitionists stepped up their attack on Texas entering as a slave state. As the abolitionists were at that time a small minority group, the opposition on the part of the North was mainly based on grounds other than anti-slavery arguments. The real issue at stake in 1836-1837, as was true in the Missouri controversy of an earlier date, was the issue of increasing

51 Ibid., pp. 1527-1531.

52 Wharton to Austin, December 11, 1836, D. C. T., I, 142.
the Southern section's political interest in the federal government with the admission of Texas into the Union. It was probably true, as Texans charged that Northeasterners were jealous of the proposed increased strength of the South by the addition of Texas. 53

A summation of Northern extremist arguments in opposition to annexation of Texas, or even sympathy for Texas, is found in a letter written by William Ellery Channing, a New England Unitarian minister and reformer, to Henry Clay. The letter was published in pamphlet form in London in 1837. It did not cause much stir in the North, involved as it was by that time in the great depression of 1837, but it is a lucid summary of Northeastern arguments against involvements with Texas. Channing avowed that he had no political or party feelings, but was writing on the question from a moral standpoint using the best interests of the Union as a guide. He declared that the Texas revolt was criminal and not to be compared with that of the United States against England. Americans who went to Texas did so knowing what sort of government Mexico had, particularly the unsettled state of that government, so they had no right to revolt because of centralization of the

53 Ibid., p. 82.

54 William Ellery Channing, A Letter on the Annexation of Texas to the United States (London, 1837). All of the following references to Channing's arguments are taken from this letter.
government of Mexico. Channing contended that the grounds given for the revolt and establishing of the independence of Texas are "glaringly deficient in truth and reason." He then proceeded to give his version of "the true causes for the revolt." First, he listed land speculation as a cause, adding that the Texas empresarios, men who received the grants from the Mexican government, made out scrip on their land and sold it in the United States. Much of it was fraudulent. He also cited the giant land fraud of the Coahuila-Texas legislature in early 1835, when the legislators disposed of more than four hundred square leagues of the Mexican public domain for twenty thousand dollars to land speculators, many of whom were members of the legislature. The Mexican government disavowed this act and Santa Anna forcibly dissolved the Coahuila-Texas legislature on his way to Texas in 1835. Most of the members of the legislature, as well as the speculators subsequently joined the Texas revolution. As Channing saw it, many United States citizens, as well as Texans, had land titles that could only be substantiated by severing Texas from Mexico.

Second, Channing asserted that the determination of Mexico to do away with slavery was a cause. Channing became somewhat emotional on the slavery issue, but his arguments had some validity. Although Texas had been excluded from the decree abolishing slavery, a fact which he does not mention, there were other Mexican laws regulating slavery, such as forbidding
the selling of slaves, or the bringing of any more slaves into Texas, which the Texans generally evaded or disregarded, as they pleased. Channing supported his slavery stand by stating that the Texans were in a minority in the Coahuila-Texas legislature and were disappointed in not becoming a separate state. The reason they wanted to make Texas a separate state, as well as maintain a federal system, was so they would be able to safeguard slavery. When their hopes were dashed by Santa Anha's centralization of the government, they revolted.

Channing further maintained that the revolution was accomplished by citizens of the United States. He asserted that there were only fifty native Texans in Houston's army of eight hundred. The remainder were United States citizens. He believed that when the rebellion started, the United States government should have assisted Mexico in stopping it, instead of even attempting to maintain neutrality. Channing was somewhat prophetic when he wrote that the annexation of Texas would constitute the first step in a wave of conquests and imperialism toward Mexico. He maintained that the annexation of Texas would continually embroil the United States in war with Mexico and others. He also contended that the admission of Texas would open a vast field for slavery and would furnish a market that would invigorate slavery. Channing stated that the extension of territory would endanger the Union by making

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55 Garrison, *Westward Extension*, p. 27.
the country unwieldy, and the increase in the political power of the slave states would eventually demand the separation of the states. He also raised the question of constitutionality. Admitting that the United States had acquired territory by purchase before, he asserted that Texas was different in that it would constitute the annexation of an independent country. Furthermore, he felt that the right to purchase Louisiana and Florida should have been opposed on constitutional grounds. In conclusion, he even went so far as to advocate secession if Texas were annexed.

It is true that there were some Northern politicians who were adamant in their opposition to any sympathy for the Texans and their Southern "conspirators." John Q. Adams in May of 1836 charged that the government's military appropriations were designed for war against Mexico, to annex territory and extend slavery. It became increasingly difficult as Texas became inextricably bound up with the extension of slavery for any Northern politician to favor anything about Texas. In fact, Daniel Webster is reported to have said in early 1837, that no politician in New England can long maintain himself who opposes the abolition of slavery.

56 Adams to Everitt, May 10, 1836, American Historical Review, XI (January, 1906), 350-351.

57 Hunt to Henderson, April 15, 1837, D. C. T., I, 208.
Of course, Channing's arguments were extremist. Most Northern politicians, as well as practically all those who opposed the recognition and annexation of Texas continually reiterated that it would put the United States in a bad light as far as the rest of the world was concerned. Actions of the United States during the Texas revolution had given some reason for England and France to suspect United States intentions. Any precipitate steps toward recognition or annexation would make things look worse. Even in the attempt to gain recognition, the United States held out for a while, insisting that Texas obtain recognition elsewhere first. Forsyth told Wharton that the vote of Texas for annexation "... embarrassed the matter. That if after that vote the United States were to recognize Texas too promptly it would seem as if it were a preconceived arrangement with which the United States had been frequently charged." 58

Even Andrew Jackson had become very cautious concerning recognition and annexation of Texas. He did not wish to do anything that would embarrass his friend, Van Buren. Jackson in his message to Congress in December of 1836 actually advised against immediate recognition of Texas. However, one observer concluded that Jackson's message"... was a message of


expediency, not intended to sway the Congress from a just and generous measure, but to lull the jealousy of foreign powers, and gull the national vanity of miserable Mexico, while the work goes not the less surely on. . . .” Actually Jackson was attempting to give the responsibility of recognition to Congress, for he agreed in confidential talks with Wharton and other friends of Texas after his message that he would be eager to recognize Texas if Congress would recommend such action. Wharton in turn pointed out that members of his party in Congress hesitated to push the measure fearing that it would be construed as an attack on the administration, after Jackson's speech. Jackson, considering that viewpoint shallow, stubbornly refused to send another message to Congress clarifying his stand on the matter. 61

Even though Jackson's administration did eventually recognize Texas, he and his cabinet had no intention of pushing for annexation. They felt that many sectional interests in Congress had to be reconciled before annexation would be agreed to, and that it could be accomplished with less furor under a Northern president, such as Van Buren. 62 Jackson also

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60 Catlett to Austin, January 11, 1837, D. G. T., I, 173.

61 Wharton to Austin, January 6, 1837, ibid., I, 169.

62 Wharton to Austin, January 6, 1837, ibid., I, 170.
delayed recognition for many months due to his hope to gain Texas by treaty with Mexico. Even as late as January, 1837, Jackson still hoped to pay Mexico for some sort of quit claim. The Texas minister called it "hush money," denounced all attempts to deal with Mexico in any way for Texas unless approved by the Texas government, and continued to insist on recognition. 63

President Jackson also had ideas as to how sectional interests could be reconciled to the annexation of Texas. Following is a postscript to a letter from the Texas minister in Washington to the Texas Secretary of State:

Genl. Jackson says that Texas must claim the Californias on the Pacific in order to paralyze the opposition of the North and East to Annexation. That the fishing interest of the North and East wish a harbor on the Pacific; that this claim of the Californias will give it to them and will diminish their opposition to annexation. He is very earnest and anxious on this point of claiming the Californias and says we must not consent to less. This is in strict confidence. 64

Despite the many factors working against the project, Texas was finally recognized by the United States on March, 3, 1837, after the Senate and House had concurred in recommending that Texas ought to be recognized as an independent republic. The Senate voted to recognize Texas, while the House voted

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63 Wharton to Rusk, n. d., ibid., I, 190.
64 Wharton to Rusk, n. d., ibid., I, 193.
recognition in a diplomatic appropriation bill authorizing money to send a minister from the United States to the Texas government. Recognition by the United States was followed by recognition on the part of most European governments in the years from 1839 to 1841.

However, the story was not ended with recognition, the struggling young republic still hoped for annexation to the United States. This portion of the project was destined to be quite prolonged. Throughout the next eight years the question of Texas was never too far below the surface of events, even though the panic of 1837 and the ensuing depression, the controversy over the "Gag Rule" in Congress, national politics, and diplomatic difficulties with England served to keep the issue somewhat in the background.
The United States, on March 3, 1837, became the first nation in the world to recognize the new member of the family of nations, the republic of Texas. After Texas was formally recognized by the United States, the Texans and their allies from the Southern states girded themselves to do battle for the annexation of Texas to the United States. Northeasters, generally led by abolitionists and John Quincy Adams, braced themselves to oppose wholeheartedly the annexation of Texas. These two forces were set to battle it out when to the surprise of both, the administration rejected the proposition for annexation advanced by Texas. After sporadic efforts by both forces, the exciting question of Texas was allowed to decline in importance until the offer was withdrawn by Texas in the fall of 1838. In the meantime, however, the question had served as an unmistakable symptom of the divergence and growing rift between the two sections of the United States. Two intersectional political parties, economic difficulties, and the heightening sentiment for expansion within the United States undoubtedly served to keep the question of Texas from causing even greater sectional discord in the years 1837 and 1838.
Martin Van Buren, shortly after his inauguration as president in March, 1837, was faced with one of the worst panics ever experienced by the United States. After the panic hit in May, 1837, Van Buren called for a special session of Congress to meet in August to cope with the problem of financing the government. Shortly before the special session was to meet, the Texas minister plenipotentiary, Memucan Hunt, presented a formal petition from the citizens of Texas for annexation to the United States.\footnote{Samuel F. Bemis, \textit{John Quincy Adams and the Union} (New York, 1956), p. 359. This petition was presented on August 4, 1837.}

The fears of the abolitionists and northeastern opponents of expansion that Texas would be annexed were already aroused by the fact that Van Buren had kept the dispute between the United States and Mexico alive during the summer of 1837. With the presentation of the petition for annexation they felt that their worst fears were about to be realized. The summer of 1837 was marked by a growing activity on the part of the opponents of annexation. The American Anti-Slavery Society circulated petitions protesting the annexation of Texas to the Union. The legislatures of eight Northern states eventually presented formal protests against annexation, while the legislatures of Alabama, and Tennessee presented resolutions in the opposite vein. Northern newspapers kept up a fierce clamor for rejection of the plan of
annexation. Petitions against the annexation of Texas poured into Congress in increasing numbers throughout the remaining months of 1837, but gradually declined in number and importance after it began to be apparent that neither the administration nor Congress was disposed to do anything about the question.

The anti-slavery forces opposing the annexation of Texas were joined by many and varied groups having motives for opposing. Fear that the country would become involved in a war with Mexico was the dominating influence on many of those who joined the movement in opposition to the addition of Texas. The United States had been near war with Mexico since the fall of 1835. A number of incidents occurred further straining relations between the two countries, and the United States, by early 1837, had a number of grievances against Mexico. Jackson had asked Congress for powers of naval reprisal, but had not received them before the congressional adjournment on March 3, 1837. President Van Buren then kept the dispute alive throughout the summer, while giving Mexico a great deal of time to come through with some settlement. Since Texas was still claimed by Mexico, many people feared that annexing Texas would be annexing a war with Mexico as well. Despite the policies of the

3 Bemis, p. 358.
administration in attempting to force Mexico to pay the claims of American citizens, many citizens were more than anxious to avoid a war with Mexico for any reason.

In addition to those who feared war with Mexico, there were those who opposed the annexation of Texas because they opposed expansion in any form. Industrialists and businessmen hated to see any addition to the western section which would add more public domain to lure laborers to the West. The addition of Texas would add to the group championing a cheap public land policy.

The growing opposition to the annexation of Texas did not all come from the Northern section of the country. Many from the South urged Texas to stay out of the Union in order that it might maintain a low tariff and avoid the increasingly bitter anti-slavery controversy. Southern extremists urged Texas to stay out of the Union, acquire the best part of Mexico and become a great nation, and intimated that it might not be long before the cotton states would withdraw from the Union and join Texas in a great slave holding confederacy.

However, there were many more Southerners anxious for the annexation of Texas to the Union. In early 1838, Memucan Hunt indicated the intention of Southern extremists to hold

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4 Smith, p. 69.
out for the annexation of Texas when he wrote,\(^5\)

... the declaration to me, of several members of Congress from the South that, unless Texas is annexed to the United States, they are favorable to, and will advocate its annexation to the slave holding states, and that they prefer a dissolution of the Union, and acquisition of Texas, to their present position in the Union without her.

Many abolitionists urged the rejection of Texas because it was a slave state, and abolitionists were in the forefront of the anti-Texas group. Abolitionists, such as Benjamin Lundy and William Ellery Channing, vigorously denounced the Texas revolution and the annexation project as a plot on the part of slaveholders to increase the area of slavery and to add to the power of the Southern section. Still Channing felt that the question of slavery was not a political, but a moral question. He was actually as opposed to bringing the matter into Congress as were Southern Congressmen, for he wrote in March of 1837: "Antislavery is to triumph, not by force or appeals to interest, but by becoming a living part of the public conscience and religion. Just in proportion as it is complicated with political questions and feelings, it is shorn of its strength."\(^6\) It was true, of course, that the great opposition to taking in Texas was not so much due to slavery as it was to the

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\(^5\) Hunt to Irion, March 9, 1838, D. G. T., I, 316.

\(^6\) Memoirs of William Ellery Channing (Boston, 1847), III, 187.
reluctance of the North to add any more to the sectional power and influence of the South. The anti-slavery movement was the best way of opposing Texas and keeping the issue in the limelight so that the North would not be lulled to sleep and find annexation accomplished, as John Quincy Adams feared. 7

Indeed, there were many and varied groups opposing Texas annexation by the fall of 1837. The opposition was formidable, as the advocates of annexation shortly realized.

When the twenty-fifth Congress met late in August of 1837, the opponents of annexation had no way of knowing the Van Buren administration was intending to reject the Texas bid for membership in the Union. Even after the news was out, Adams felt that the rejection was only a shrewd move on Van Buren's part to lull the North to sleep, and annexation would be accomplished in the future. 8 Those who opposed annexation had already voiced the opinion that it would be unconstitutional to annex Texas, because it was an independent foreign state. True, Louisiana and Florida had been added, but by purchase from European nations. Accordingly, on September 18, 1837, John Q. Adams offered in the House of Representatives the following resolution: "Resolved,

7 Demis, p. 360.
8 Ibid., p. 359.
That the power of annexing any independent foreign state to this Union, is a power not delegated by the Constitution to their Congress, or to any Department of their Government, but reserved to the people." Adams' resolution was defeated. Later, Senator William Preston argued that Congress could admit states made from territories into the Union, so why could it not admit Texas? Much use was made of constitutional arguments in advocating or opposing annexation. In fact, the Texas annexation plea was turned down in August, 1837, on two grounds. One was constitutional while the other hinged on the trouble with Mexico. Even though much use was made of constitutional arguments, the appeals to the Constitution were made, as usual, to justify what each group desired to do and not through fear of any unconstitutional action.

The Van Buren administration rejected annexation on constitutional grounds, but the real reasons were largely political. Since anti-Texas sentiment was growing so

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10 Benton, II, 96.
12 Hunt to Irion, October 21, 1837, D. C. T., I, 267.
rapidly among all classes and groups of people in the North, the Democratic leaders feared antagonizing this section any further. It was probably considered easier to prevail upon Southerners to wait until the party was in a stronger position, and there was not such a threat of war with Mexico.

The Texas question in 1837 certainly cut across party lines. There were politicians in both parties ardently favoring annexation. However, there were also some in both parties who were unreservedly opposed to annexation, a factor which greatly influenced the dropping of the question at that time. Sectional division was not yet deep enough to break party lines on an issue so fraught with sectional bitterness, and both parties were too intent on building up their strength to allow Texas to cause too much dissension in party ranks. The Whigs were intent on capturing control of the government and the Democrats did not wish to weaken any further their position already made vulnerable by the poor economic condition of the country.

The special session of the twenty-fifth Congress, meeting in the fall of 1837, was mostly concerned with financial difficulties. The question of Texas and Mexican involvements was not touched on very often, but a number of petitions against the annexation of Texas were presented by Northern legislators and more petitions were held back for the regular
session of Congress which began in December, 1837.  

Meanwhile, the heightening opposition to the addition of Texas served to cause the South to become more united in its demands to annex Texas for Southern safety in the national government. This was clearly illustrated by Robert J. Walker, of Mississippi, who felt that the activities of "Old Malefaction," as John Quincy Adams was called, served to strengthen the demands for annexation. Consequently, there was an attempt on the part of Southerners in the Senate to prod the executive department to reconsider the annexation of Texas in the regular session of the twenty-fifth Congress. In December of 1837, Senator John C. Calhoun presented a vaguely worded resolution designed to put the Senate on record as favorable to expansion. Calhoun's resolution affirmed the right of the South and West to extend its limits or increase its population without regard to the effect of that course on slavery. Calhoun's resolution was tabled in favor of one by Senator William C. Preston which


was more direct and to the point. Preston's resolution pro-
vided that Texas should be annexed when that could be
done"... consistently with the public faith and treaty
stipulations of the United States," and without bringing on
16 war with Mexico. The prolonged debate on the adminis-
tration's Independent Treasury Bill intervened between the
presentation of Preston's resolution and the debate on it.
Consequently it was mid-June of 1838 before it was eventually
tabled by a vote of 24 to 14. By that time, sentiment for
and against annexation had subsided somewhat.

The decline in interest was due, to some extent, to
the difficulty of sustaining interest in even such an excit-
ing question as the annexation of Texas when the administra-
tion still did not indicate any intention of doing anything
about it. In February, 1838, there was, however, one flurry
of hope that the administration might do something about
annexing Texas. The hope was aroused by the prospect that
Texas might conclude a treaty with England which might
hamper annexation at any future date. In early February,
Calhoun told Memucan Hunt that he had good grounds for be-
lieving that annexation would be speedily accomplished. He
knew that the administration was contemplating sending a
private mission to Mexico to attempt to get Mexican approval

16 Ibid., p. 76. 17 Benton, II, 97.
for the annexation of Texas to the United States and he felt that the mission would be successful. The hope died very shortly when the administration made no move to send such a mission to Mexico.

In the House of Representatives the question of Texas was also receiving some attention, although there was every indication that interest was dying as the second session of the twenty-fifth Congress progressed. Until May, 1838, resolutions pertaining to the annexation of Texas had almost invariably been laid on the table, but in late May the House began to refer them to committee, and in fact, took all of them and put them in the hands of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. Most of the time, petitions were tabled because debate on them usually turned toward slavery, and most representatives were attempting to keep the question of slavery off the floor of Congress. Early in the session even the resolutions presented by state legislatures were laid on the table without printing, just as any abolition petition was handled under the "gag rule." This procedure resulted from the fact that the resolutions from Northern states had anti-slavery arguments, while those from Tennessee and Alabama contained arguments in defense of slavery.

18 Hunt to Irion, February 3, 1838, P. G. T., I, 290.

19 Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, IX, 538.
It is an interesting fact that the house voted to table both the pro-Texas resolutions and the anti-Texas resolutions by the same majority, 122 to 74.

The "gag rule" had been fairly successful in stifling any adverse debate on the subject of slavery in the House of Representatives for two years, but with the reference of the Texas petitions to committee, the anti-slavery forces in the House primed their guns to indict slavery in the forthcoming debate on Texas. On the other hand, the Committee on Foreign Affairs tried not to stir up any debate on Texas which might turn toward slavery. George C. Dromgoole of Virginia, presented the report of the Committee in early June, 1838. The Committee reported that since there was no proposition pending in the House for the admission of Texas as a state in the Union or for the territorial annexation of Texas, that the committee should not recommend any action, and asked that it be discharged from further consideration of the subject and that all the petitions be laid

20 Bemis, p. 366.

21 All subsequent references relating to parliamentary maneuvers and Adams' three-week speech on Texas is taken from Speech of John Quincy Adams, of Massachusetts, upon the Right of the People, Men and Women, to Petition; on the Freedom of Speech and of Debate in the House of Representatives. . . . on the Resolution of Seven State Legislatures, Relating to the Annexation of Texas to This Union. (Washington, 1838); cited in Bemis, pp. 367-370. There is also a sketchy account of the speech in Adams, Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, X, 18-30.
on the table. The committee did not wish debate on the subject, in fact had not even read or considered the petitions, as Adams later forced Benjamin C. Howard, chairman of the committee, to admit. However, after some adroit maneuvering, Adams managed to move, in an amendment, that the Texas petitions be recommitted with instructions to report a resolution stating that it would be unconstitutional to annex any independent foreign state to the Union. The debate then waxed hot in the House on the annexation of Texas, or more correctly, on the social, political, and moral evils of slavery. John Q. Adams, now reaching the pinnacle of his public career as a civil rights champion, managed to get the floor on the morning of June 16 and succeeded in holding it, by skillful maneuvering, until Congress adjourned on July 9. In his three-week speech, Adams rang all the old abolitionist charges concerning conspiracy in the Texas revolution. His speech was an indictment of slavery more than anything else. He testified: "I do believe slavery to be a sin before the sight of God, and that is the reason and the only insurmountable reason why we should not annex Texas to this Union."

For some reason, Adams' speech did not stir up public opinion as much as the Committee of Foreign Affairs had feared. The matter had been relegated to the background for so long that it was difficult to stir up interest in the proposition. With the political parties and the administration
attempting to soft-pedal the issue of slavery, Texas was too hot to handle. As early as January, 1838, Hunt had written the Texas Secretary of State disclosing the status of the Texas question.  

... the matter has been thrown into the background for the present, as it were by common consent, and that in the existing state of transition, in which parties appear to be, leading men are principally engrossed with their own personal safety, position, and prospects.

Needless to say, the latter did not apply to old John Quincy Adams. Many legislators who were personally not averse to the annexation of Texas dreaded to bring on, by pushing the Texas issue, the bitter struggle between the North and South which would certainly result. At any rate, the Texas question was fast losing its popular appeal. True, Southern extremists continued to hope for annexation, while Northerners occasionally condemned the Texas revolution and the subsequent attempts at annexation as an effort to expand the power of the slave holding South in the national government and spread the institution of slavery.

Congress adjourned on July 9, 1838. The Texas question seemed about dead. In fact John Q. Adams later claimed that his speech in the summer of 1838 laid the Texas question for


three years. His speech was influential, but Adams was taking an undue amount of credit. Administration indifference, congressional timidity in raising questions tending to lead to adverse discussion of slavery, fear of war with Mexico, severe economic difficulties, political conditions, and other factors aided the Massachusetts legislator in putting the Texas question to rest for many months.

The administration apparently had disposed of the issue of annexing Texas, but the proposition had never been formally withdrawn. The opponents of the annexation of Texas did not rest easily until the offer by Texas was withdrawn formally on October 12, 1838. The reason for the withdrawal of the offer by Texas appears to be that it hampered Texas treaty negotiations with England and France, and placed Texas in an undignified position before the world.25 Then in December, 1838, Mirabeau B. Lamar succeeded Sam Houston as president of Texas, and Lamar was definitely opposed to reopening annexation negotiations. Since neither the United States nor Texas desired annexation, interest in the Texas question continued to decline.


26 George L. Rives, The United States and Mexico (New York, 1913), I, 495.
Meanwhile, the Van Buren administration had moved toward a settlement of the claims controversy between the United States and Mexico, a settlement which was almost as influential in allaying the fears of Northerners as was the Texas withdrawal of the annexation proposition. The refusal of the offer of annexation allowed the United States to press her claims against Mexico without any suspicion of ulterior motives. The Van Buren administration was anxious to avoid such suspicion and to avoid any chance of war with Mexico, because of the opposition of the American people.27 In June, 1837, Robert Greenhow, a state department interpreter, was sent to Mexico City to present the United States claims for the last time. The Mexican government indicated a willingness to negotiate for a settlement of the claims, and sent a minister to the United States, the first since Gorostiza withdrew in the fall of 1835. The minister arrived October 14, 1837, and wrote a number of letters to the State Department. However, nothing concrete was done. Van Buren laid the whole matter before Congress in his annual message in December, 1837, but Congress, involved in economic matters, especially the sub treasury bill, was not disposed to consider the matter at great length, except to indicate its sentiment for arbitration of the claims. Public opinion, throughout

27 Clayton C. Kohl, Claims as a Cause of the Mexican War (New York, 1914), p. 29.
most of the country was definitely in favor of arbitration. Shortly after Van Buren's message, negotiations were begun and successfully carried through on September 11, 1838, when the United States signed a convention to submit the claims to arbitration. Mexico did not sign, but a new agreement was signed by both parties to the dispute April 11, 1839, submitting the claims to a mixed commission, and in 1840 the arbitrators began their sessions. With the apparent settlement of the claims controversy with Mexico and the formal withdrawal by Texas of the petition for annexation, the question of Texas seemed to have ended by the end of 1838. Interest began to die out, petitions stopped flooding in, and Texas played no part in the amusing "log cabin" campaign of 1840. However, the question of Texas was not as dead as Northerners hoped and Southerners feared. Political expediency, in conjunction with other factors, was to make the question of Texas an even more vital political and sectional issue within a short time.

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29 Ibid., p. 495.
CHAPTER III
FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT AND RE-EMERGENCE

Abolitionists were hopeful that the question of Texas was settled by the end of 1838, and Southern extremists, as well as expansionists everywhere were fearful that this hope of the abolitionists would be fulfilled. For a time it did appear that the problem was resolved, for the Texas question almost dropped out of sight for a period of four years. It was true that Mississippi never gave up on the annexation question, and New Orleans, the trade center for Texas in the United States, was extremely interested in Texas affairs, but elsewhere, Texas and the Texas question appeared to have been forgotten. Newspapers throughout the country made little or no mention of the republic of Texas.

Meanwhile, Texas was having its troubles, and financial difficulties were most serious. Texas, financially embarrassed throughout 1837, turned to issuing paper money which rapidly depreciated in value until by 1840 Texas money was almost worthless. Throughout this time Texas was trying

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1 Smith, p. 71. Complete files of newspapers disclose that many leading newspapers mentioned Texas fewer than half a dozen times in the years 1839, 1840, and 1841.
desperately to sell land in the midst of a depression. Texas bonds would not sell in the depression-ridden United States and Texas could not sell her bonds to European countries until she was able to obtain recognition from them.

By 1839, however, this problem was being resolved. Texas was successful in obtaining French recognition in September, 1839. England deferred recognition for a time attempting to use recognition as a lever to get the institution of slavery abolished in Texas, but eventually a treaty was signed between Great Britain and Texas in November, 1840, although technicalities prevented its going into effect until June, 1842. In the meantime England was getting deeply involved in Texas-Mexican affairs, attempting to pressure Mexico into recognizing Texas, lending money to Texas and all the while working for abolition of slavery in Texas. There is little doubt that during this period British influence in Texas was greater than the influence of the United States, in view of the fact that American interest had virtually disappeared.

In November and December, 1841, a few articles began to appear in Democratic newspapers to the effect that Texas should be reannexed, bringing out the old argument that Texas had once been part of the United States but had been

2 Rives, I, 469-472.

3 Smith, p. 76.
given away in the Adams-Onis Treaty of 1819. The Morning Courier and New York Examiner in December appealed to abolitionists for the support of annexation, reasoning that by adding Texas to the Union the African slave trade to Texas could be suppressed, that the slaves who went from the United States to Texas would be happier in warm Texas and that Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Missouri would eventually export all their slaves and abolish slavery. This would mean that there might be five new free states to balance the five slave states anticipated from the annexation of Texas. The strength of this move led abolitionists to warn John Quincy Adams that the old project to annex Texas was on foot.

However, there was little prospect of any success as long as Daniel Webster was Secretary of State. It was well known that Webster was opposed to anything which would extend slavery, and was not likely to favor the addition of Texas for any reason. Nevertheless, a majority of Tyler's cabinet seemed to favor annexation, though some doubted if two thirds of the Senate would ratify a Texas treaty. In addition many

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4 Bemis, p. 450.

5 Morning Courier and New York Examiner, December 16, 1841, cited in Bemis, p. 450.

6 Adams, XI, 29.

7 Rives, I, 506.
of Tyler's friends were beginning to prevail upon him to attempt to accomplish annexation.

President John Tyler by early 1842 was already a man without a party. Expelled by the Whigs and distrusted by Democrats, Tyler had to depend on a small body of administration followers and friends derisively known as the "Corporal's Guard". Among the friends of Tyler was Henry S. Wise, an impulsive and arrogant representative from Virginia. Early in 1842, Wise, in a debate over sending Waddy Thompson as minister to Mexico, argued for the annexation of Texas. Wise pointed out that English newspapers were openly printing that defaulting nations would pay their debts with territory. Mexico owed England more than $50,000,000 and Wise maintained that Great Britain would force Mexico to cede Texas and California if the United States did not act. Wise also taunted the anti-slavery forces by arguing that nothing could be done about abolishing slavery in Texas unless it were made a part of the United States. Some legislators were inclined to view Wise's speech as an opening gun in a Tyler attempt to effect annexation, or at least a trial balloon. The majority, however, was inclined to regard it as nothing more than an outburst by the impulsive Wise.

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By the fall of 1842 interest in Texas was again revived. Public meetings were held throughout the country, funds were raised and men were recruited to send to Texas in order to combat an expected invasion of Texas by British-inspired Mexico. The expected invasion never materialized, but the fear of British designs on Texas was increasingly important as a factor in fanning the temper of the United States in favor of annexing Texas in order to thwart Great Britain.

There is some indication that fear of British activities in Texas was warranted, even though British designs were blown up and made more threatening than they actually were by a few politicians whose object was to stir up public sentiment for the immediate annexation of Texas. England was interested in abolishing slavery in Texas, settling Texas lands, and losing its dependence on the United States cotton market. English abolitionists hoped that the decline of the United States cotton market in England would make slavery economically unprofitable and slavery would then be abolished in the United States. Rumors of great numbers of immigrants from Great Britain served to increase American fear of the growing English influence on

9 Smith, p. 72.

10 Ibid., pp. 85-93. Smith develops and cites numerous instances of British involvement in abolition schemes in Texas.
her southwestern border. The New York Journal of Commerce in mid-1842 announced that a contract for 1700 British settlers had been made by Texas. Rumors of British tampering with Texas grew.

Sam Houston, still perhaps the most important Texan, was engaging in a devious game of playing the United States off against Great Britain. The subject of annexation had again been broached to the United States government by Isaac Van Zandt, Texas minister in Washington, in late 1842, and the proposal met with indifference. Most of the executive department favored it, but did not regard it as practical at the time. Six months later Houston was playing a devious diplomatic game with England. He intimated that Texas, in return for substantial aid, would side with England in a war with the United States, a war which he suggested was highly probable in the near future. Houston's motives are still in doubt, but it seems likely that he intended to play England off against the United States by keeping both thinking that the other was preparing to grab off Texas, until Texas could become a strong country and Houston would go down in history as the founder of a great nation.

12 Jones, p. 81.
13 Houston to Elliott, May 13, 1843, cited in Smith, p. 95.
Regardless of the accusation of some congressmen and writers that the rumors of a British plot to take Texas or to abolish slavery there, were designed only to make a president, it is true that the fear of a large part of the American people of such an occurrence was very real. Britain was the hereditary enemy and the United States had been having many difficulties with her over the slave trade, the northwest boundary of Maine, and other matters. Even Southerners who disregarded the effect on slavery of British control of Texas were alarmed that the old enemy should have a possession so close to the mouth of the Mississippi River. The effect on slavery in the United States was considered to be disastrous if slavery were abolished in Texas. Slaves would be running away to Texas where they would be freed and Southern slaveholders would lose thousands of dollars in property. Looming in the background also, was the ever present spectre of a servile uprising if abolitionists were present as close as the Texas border, spreading their propaganda and urging a slave revolt. Even a dim prospect of British control of Texas or abolition of slavery there, was distinctly unpalatable to most.

14 Benton, II, 581-600. Benton attributes the cry of a British plot in Texas to propaganda largely instigated by Calhoun to ruin Van Buren's chances in the election of 1844. Others took the same line.
Southerners. To Northerners, British control of Texas was not desirable, but a certain addition of territory and strength to the slave power by adding Texas was less desirable than a highly uncertain growth of British power on the southwestern border of the country.

Interest in the Texas question really began to blossom early in 1843 after the publication of a letter in a Baltimore newspaper by congressman T. W. Gilmer of Virginia. Gilmer's letter, arguing that the United States should annex Texas immediately as a military measure to thwart British plans in Texas, was described by Benton as "a clap of thunder in a clear sky". Gilmer's letter appears to have really been a trial balloon, for Gilmer was one of Tyler's "faithful few". The ratification of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty had settled differences with England and Tyler was then free to pursue Texas. After the publication of the letter, resolutions by state legislatures and petitions from citizens began to pour into congress again. The legislatures of Mississippi and Alabama passed resolutions favoring the annexation of Texas, while Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont and Ohio passed resolutions opposing annexation.

16 Benton, II, 581.
17 Bemis, p. 462.
On the occasion of the publication of Gilmer's letter, Aaron V. Brown, a young Tennessee congressman, wrote a letter to the old chief, Andrew Jackson, to get his opinion on the Texas question. Jackson replied that the immediate acquisition of Texas was necessary to protect the United States in case of war with Great Britain. The old man was genuinely alarmed over British designs on Texas.

John Quincy Adams, ever on the alert, proposed to the Committee on Foreign Affairs that they bring forward his proposals of 1838. Failing in this attempt to put the House on record as opposed to the annexation of Texas, at the close of that session of Congress, March 3, 1843, Adams and twelve of his anti-slavery colleagues issued a circular addressed to the free states averring that the annexation of Texas "would be identical with the dissolution of the Union."

This circular and the petitions of Northern states against

18 Jackson to Aaron V. Brown, February 12, 1843, Correspondence of Jackson, VI, 201-202.

19 Adams, Memoirs, XI, 330. That Congress (or any department of the government) had no power to annex a foreign state or people, and a declaration that any attempt to annex Texas, by act of Congress or by treaty, would be unconstitutional, null and void, and the free states of the Union and their people ought not to submit.

20 Smith, p. 132, citing National Intelligencer May 4, 1843.
annexation were threatening nullification, condemned so roundly by these very parties when threatened by South Carolina a little more than ten years before.

Despite the manifestation of a reviving interest in the Texas question, the issue caused little stir in the North. The issue had been before the country a long time and had never succeeded, consequently there was not a great deal of controversy over Texas in the spring and summer of 1843. However, the Tyler administration was slowly and surely preparing the public for annexation during the remainder of 1843. Tyler was convinced early in that year that the United States should annex Texas for the best interest of the country and for the best interest of Tyler. It was becoming increasingly clear that both Henry Clay and Martin Van Buren, the most prominent contenders for the presidential nomination of the Whig and Democratic parties, would have to oppose the immediate annexation of Texas, for both had to depend on votes from the North where it was dangerous to advocate the admission of Texas. Tyler must have had the hope that pushing a measure so popular with the Southern Democracy as the annexation of Texas might give him favor with the Democratic party. At least it would hurt Van Buren's chances for the Democratic nomination and might even settle the choice on

21 Smith, p. 133.
Tyler. If not, the Texas question might furnish at least an opportunity for him to make a rapprochement with the Democrats which would not allow his followers to be cut off from the patronage.

Articles on the advisability of annexing Texas began to appear with increasing frequency in newspapers throughout the country. In June 1843, there appeared in the Washington Madisonian, a Tyler journal, an article which again rang the charges of British interference in Texas.

If Great Britain, as her philanthropists and blustering presses intimate, entertains a design to possess Mexico or Texas, or to interfere in any manner with the slaves of the Southern States, but a few weeks we fancy, at any time, will suffice to rouse the whole American people to arms like one vast nest of hornets. 23

The move to annex Texas was well under way. Thomas Hart Benton wrote that the annexation movement went on for two years before it came above water in the political scene. In a sense Benton was right; the Texas question was referred to very infrequently in Congress until the early spring of 1844, but newspapers and public men were giving increasing attention

22 Ibid., p. 134.


24 Benton, II, 600.
to the issue. In the fall of 1843 abolitionist newspapers began to predict that there would shortly be a strong push to annex Texas.\textsuperscript{25}

Still blocking the annexation move, however, was one of the strongest factors that had caused the decline of the Texas question after 1838, the almost certain fact that the annexation of Texas would mean war with Mexico. Mexico had never recognized the independence of Texas and was still nominally bent on putting down the rebellion of the Texans. Actually, Mexican pride prevented her from recognizing a distasteful but accomplished fact, for no serious effort had been made to reconquer Texas.

In the fall of 1844, the Mexican minister warned of the possibility of war. The continually heightening agitation of the Texas issue by the American press caused the Mexican minister to the United States, Juan Almonte, to protest to the State Department that the American Congress was intending to consider the advisability of appropriating a good part of the territory of Mexico, and if the executive department were to sanction such aggression he would consider his mission at an end. He warned that his government was "resolved to declare war" on receiving notice of such action.\textsuperscript{26} The American

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{25}Smith, p. 135.
  \item \textsuperscript{26}Almonte to Upshur, November 3, 1843, Senate Documents, 28th Congress, 1st session, No. 1, p. 38, cited in Smith, p. 136.
\end{itemize}
Secretary of State, Abel P. Upshur, answered, in effect, that the United States considered Texas an independent country and would not deem it necessary to consult any third country in her relations with Texas. 27

The Tyler administration was resolved to proceed with plans already under way regardless of the realization that annexation might mean war. Earlier, Tyler had entertained an idea designed to accomplish Mexican recognition of the independence of Texas, but his plan failed. He had wanted to trade the disputed Oregon territory, as far south as the Columbia River, to England, requiring England in return to pay Mexico for ceding Northern California, including San Francisco, to the United States and recognizing the independence of Texas. Mexico would not agree to negotiate on such a basis, nor would Congress appropriate money for a special mission. 28

Even though it is now known that an annexation attempt had been decided on by Tyler and his friends as early as the first part of 1843, in the last weeks of that year the anti-Texas movement in the North seemed to be dying down. It

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27 Upshur to Almonte, November 8, 1843, Ibid., No. 41.
Daniel Webster resigned May 8, 1843, after realizing that Tyler intended to become a candidate for president. Webster knew that, as a cabinet officer, he would be expected to support his chief and he did not intend to do so.

28 Smith, p. 109.
seems that the opponents of annexation considered the obstacles against immediate accomplishment of the project as almost insurmountable. Horace Greeley wrote in December that there was no need to rouse an anti-Texas agitation because: (1) Texas was not asking for annexation (2) England opposed the addition of Texas to the United States (3) Mexico threatened war in the event of annexation (4) three fourths of the American people did not desire Texas, and even the South, known to favor strict construction of the Constitution, would be likely to oppose any attempt at annexation. Therefore, it was useless for the North to agitate the question.

Daniel Webster's letter early in 1844 added to the feeling that a Texas treaty could not succeed. Webster in a public letter went on record as opposed to Texas annexation and marshalled constitutional arguments against the project. At the same time he argued that it was not expedient to annex Texas, even if it were constitutional. Instead, the land already possessed by the United States should be further developed.

In December, 1843, a new Congress was convening, and the plan to add Texas to the United States by treaty was nearing a climax. President John Tyler, for the first time publicly


30 Webster to citizens, January 23, 1844, cited in Smith, p. 139.
referred to annexation in his annual message to Congress. He did not actually recommend annexation, but did note that if annexation were considered feasible, then Mexican threats of war should be disregarded. The administration's preparation of the American public for annexation was going smoothly. In a few short weeks the Texas question was to become the paramount issue on the American scene.

Foremost in the ranks of the men responsible for Texas annexation propaganda in the following weeks was Robert J. Walker, an ardent expansionist Senator from Mississippi. Walker was heavily involved in land speculation in Texas, but aside from this fact, was consistently enthusiastic about extending the limits of the United States. Walker believed in the term "manifest destiny" before that phrase was coined. He was one of President Tyler's closest allies in the efforts from 1843-1845 to get Texas into the Union. Walker skillfully used the threat of British interference in Texas to bolster his propaganda. William C. Murphy, American charge d'affaires in Texas, sent Walker a complete digest of his activities and his suspicions. Correspondence which he

31 Messages and Papers of the Presidents, James D. Richardson, editor (Washington, 1897), IV, 79.

had seen, wrote Murphy, "established beyond all question... the intriguing of the government of Great Britain in the domestic concerns of Texas and Mexico--the whole object of which is to effect the abolition of slavery in Texas." Other friends wrote Walker in a similar vein. These alarms might have disturbed Walker, but he knew that the State Department put no trust in Murphy, who was heavily speculating in Texas lands. The State Department preferred to believe Sir Richard Pakenham, newly arrived British minister who denied any attempts by Great Britain to tamper with slavery in Texas. However, letters such as he had received were excellent for use in Walker's propaganda campaign to stir up fear on the part of the public that England was gaining in influence in Texas.

Early in February, Walker published the definitive case for annexation. Walker's letter was a masterpiece of appeal to all sections of the country for the annexation of Texas, and its influence would be hard to overestimate. He set forth in one document practically every argument ever advanced for annexation. New Englanders were told that Texas

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would increase the national output of cotton and thus aid the textile industry. The middle states were told that Texas would open new markets for iron and coal and bring new shipping business. The Northwest would gain a new market for grain. The South and Southwest were alarmed by the details of England's sinister designs on Texas. In short, Walker pictured annexation as a crusade, the success of which would be vital to the whole country. Almost immediately after publication of Walker's letter, administration newspapers, joined by Calhoun's mouthpiece, the Washington Spectator, set up a steady howl for annexation.

Shortly afterwards, a New England Democrat, Theodore Sedgewick, answered Walker's arguments on the Texas question. Sedgewick pointed out that annexation would mean war with Mexico, an item which Walker had neglected, but more particularly he emphasized that the addition of Texas would enhance the position of slavery, despite Walker's contention that by spreading slavery over a wider area it would be weakened.

In the meantime, from Mississippi came resolutions in favor of the annexation of Texas, resolutions introduced by Walker in the Senate and Congressman William Hammett in the


36 Theodore Sedgewick, Thoughts on the Proposed Annexation of Texas (New York, 1844).
House. Hammett, in a fiery speech, wrongly forecast the bitter division on Texas when he shouted, "Let the struggle come when it might, in the South there would be no distinction between Whig and Democrat."

While the question was debated with increasing fervor, plans for the treaty were almost complete; only Sam Houston's sudden objections appeared to stand in the way. Houston was insistent that the United States guarantee adequate naval and military protection to Texas while the treaty was being considered by the Senate. Houston also doubted if the treaty would be ratified by the Senate. However, he was being subjected to pressure by his fellow Texans and his old friend, Andrew Jackson, and after Upshur had assured him that according to inquiries he had made, the treaty would be ratified, Houston gave in. He dispatched J. Pinckney Henderson to Washington with authority to conclude a treaty of annexation. Houston did stipulate that adequate military and naval protection be furnished Texas while the treaty was before the Senate. This stipulation when adhered to by Tyler caused the President to receive a great deal of criticism, while the Senate was debating the treaty, for having so nearly brought the United States into war with Mexico without the approval of Congress. By the end of February all essential

37 Congressional Globe, 28th Congress, 1st session, p. 410.
points had been agreed on by Van Zandt and Upshur. Of course, Henderson had not then arrived with Houston's stipulation. 38

It was at that stage that a spectacular accident influenced the course of the Texas question. A new gun, aptly named the "Peacemaker" exploded on board the naval vessel, Princeton, killing Secretary Upshur, Secretary of the Navy, Gilmer, and three other people. Several were wounded, including Senator Benton, and the President barely escaped being involved, having remained below to answer a question from one of the ladies on board. 39

The Texas question received added sectional implication as a result of the "Peacemaker" explosion's removal of Upshur from the scene. Tyler appointed John C. Calhoun, who was in temporary retirement, as the new Secretary of State. Calhoun reluctantly accepted the appointment because it was placed on a patriotic basis. The fact was that Calhoun had the reputation of being the leading sectionalist of the country, due to South Carolina's usual belligerent attitude on sectional issues, plus the belief that Calhoun almost completely ran things in South Carolina. Despite the fact


39 National Intelligencer, February 29, 1844.
that the appointment of Calhoun was generally well regarded, on any issue that had the slightest sectional implication, Calhoun would be suspected of having the ulterior motive of strengthening the South at the expense of the North.

Calhoun was already convinced of the necessity of annexing Texas, not necessarily to advance slavery, but to protect the economic interests of the United States. He was genuinely worried about English designs on Texas and the effect on slavery in the United States if Texas were to abolish the institution.

There is no disregarding the fact that Calhoun was intending to use his position to attempt to make an alliance with the West, which would as he saw it, save the Union from ultimate breakup. This alliance would enable the South to protect its position within the Union. He hoped to link the Texas issue and the reoccupation of Oregon, desired by Westerners, to form the basis for a new alliance between the South and the West. The new alliance would then have the voting strength in Congress to repeal the last traces of the protective tariff system, and to keep the

40 An interesting, controversial, and very different interpretation is advanced by Oscar Handlin, Chance or Destiny (Boston, 1955), pp. 49-73. Handlin, in effect, rates the explosion on the Princeton as the factor which gave the Texas question its sectional flavor by bringing Calhoun to the State Department, an assumption which the facts do not seem to bear out.
South from becoming even more definitely a minority section. 

The enhancing of slavery through the annexation of Texas was not an end in itself as far as Calhoun was concerned, but a possible means of protecting the entire South and indirectly preserving the Union.

In early March the treaty negotiations were considered to be in excellent condition and the Senate was expected to quickly ratify the Texas treaty when it was sent to the Senate. Senator George McDuffie of South Carolina wrote Calhoun:

... I mention to you in confidence that the Texas question is in such a state, that in ten days after your arrival the Treaty of Annexation would be signed, and from poor Upshur's count 40 senators would vote for it. The President says he has hopes of the acquiescence of Mexico. 42

By the end of March, when Calhoun arrived in Washington, the Texas question was fast becoming an all-absorbing issue in the national eye. President Tyler had openly embraced the project and Texas land and scrip speculators began to swarm in Washington to lobby for annexation. 43 The new Secretary of State began talks with Henderson on April 1, 1844, and negotiations proceeded rapidly, with the treaty being signed on April 12.

41 Chauncey S. Boucher, "The Annexation of Texas and the Bluffton Movement in South Carolina," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, VI (June, 1919), p. 15.


43 Benton, II, 587.
The treaty of annexation provided for the annexation of Texas as a territory of the United States with all the rights of any territory. The treaty, if ratified by the United States Senate, would then have to be accepted by the citizens of Texas. At that time Texas was a vast territory, and imagined by most Americans as even larger than it actually was. It was to be expected that several states would ultimately be made from the territory of Texas. The prospect was alarming to Northerners. In mid-April when the treaty was signed, partisan feelings were already growing heated, but sectional animosity was shortly to be stirred even greater by the Texas question.
CHAPTER IV

PARTY POLITICS AND THE TEXAS TREATY

The question of the annexation of Texas was rapidly becoming an issue which political parties could not dodge. Tyler and his friends, in conjunction with John C. Calhoun, had seen to it that Texas would be an issue in the coming political campaign unless the Senate promptly ratified the treaty of annexation signed on April 12, 1844.

It had been confidently expected by Upshur that the treaty would be ratified, but after the first part of March, partisan and sectional pressures were rising until it was not certain how the treaty would fare in the Senate. The Whig press had been attacking the Texas project with full force since early March, and Thomas Hart Benton, certain that the Texas agitation was a nefarious Calhoun scheme to rob Van Buren of the presidency, had denounced the move. Benton went even further, claiming that it was, on the part of some, a presidential intrigue and a plot to dissolve the Union, and on the part of others a Texas scrip and land speculation. The anti-slavery forces in Congress were still

\[1\] Wiltse, p. 167.

\[2\] James F. Rhodes, History of the United States (New York, 1913), I, 78-79.
as unyielding as ever in their opposition to the addition of Texas. Actually, the prospect for the ratification of the treaty was poor and becoming worse each day when Calhoun sent the treaty with accompanying correspondence and documents to the Senate on April 22.

Calhoun had intended to hold the treaty until word from a special mission to Mexico could be obtained, for a mission had been sent to attempt to gain the acquiescence of Mexico to the annexation, and after the treaty was signed, Calhoun had turned to other duties of his office. Upshur had received, and not answered, a letter from the British foreign minister, Lord Aberdeen. The letter was intended to deny any British intention to interfere in Texas, but Aberdeen frankly avowed working for Mexican recognition of Texas independence with an acceptable *quid pro quo* the abolition of slavery in Texas. Calhoun particularly seized on Aberdeen’s statement that, "it must be and is well known, both to the United States and to the whole world, that Great Britain desires and is continually exerting herself to procure, the general abolition of slavery throughout the world." Aberdeen denied any intention to interfere with slavery in the

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3 Pakenham to Upshur, February 26, 1844, *Works of Calhoun*, Richard K. Cralle, editor (New York, 1874), V,330-333. The letter was written December 26, 1843, but had been copied and reached Upshur only two days before he died.
United States or with internal affairs in Texas "provided other states acted with equal forbearance."

Calhoun answered Aberdeen in arguments typical of Southern thinking on the subject of Texas and slavery. He put forth historically the case for annexation, and showed the danger to Southern institutions which would result from abolition of slavery in Texas, then acknowledged the signature of a treaty of annexation. Had he stopped at that point, the letter would not have aroused such a sectional furor as it later did, but Calhoun went ahead to paint in glowing terms the institution of slavery as being the best system ever devised. 4

Calhoun's correspondence, accompanied by other documents having a bearing on the treaty were sent to the Senate along with a message by Tyler. Senator William Archer, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, had promised not to consider the treaty for forty days so that word from Mexico might be received. 5 The treaty and the correspondence was meant to be secret, but five days after the treaty was sent to the Senate, there was a leak. The treaty and documents were printed in the New York Evening Post, a Van Buren paper. The leak was quickly traced to Senator Benjamin Tappan, of

4 Calhoun to Pakenham, April 18, 1844, ibid., pp.333-339.
5 Benton, II, 608.
Ohio, a friend of Van Buren's. Almost immediately, editorial
fire concentrated on the Calhoun letter to Pakenham with its
implication of sectional reasons for the annexation of
Texas. After publication of the treaty and accompanying
documents, Northern opposition to the Texas project snow-
balled.

Meanwhile, the presidential race was getting well under way, a race in which the two major contenders intended that Texas should play no part. It was considered fairly certain that Henry Clay would be nominated as the Whig candidate for
president. As early as January, Martin Van Buren was con-
sidered almost certain to receive the Democratic nomination. He had all New England delegations pledged to him, plus the
delegations from New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Virginia,
Alabama, Mississippi and other states. However, there were
domn powerful forces within the Democratic party opposed to Van
Buren. There were also a number of other prospective can-
didates, most of them in the nature of favorite sons.
Handsome James Buchanan of Pennsylvania, phlegmatic Lewis
Cass of Michigan, and colorful Richard M. Johnson of
Kentucky were in the race. John C. Calhoun was still con-
sidered by many to be a candidate, although he had withdrawn


7 Paul, pp. 66-81.
his name from consideration in December, 1843. Of course, John Tyler hoped to ride into the White House on the Texas issue. In early 1844 it was not known what would be the stand of any of the candidates on the Texas question, although Clay was expected to oppose, and Tyler to advocate immediate annexation. Van Buren's opinion was unknown, but Southern Democrats confidently expected him to favor the project, while Northern Democrats were expecting him to oppose, largely because Southerners did not think he could win if he opposed, and Northerners did not think he could win if he favored annexation. Actually Van Buren was in the usual dilemma concerning the Texas question. The publication of Calhoun's letter to Pakenham had drawn the lines on Texas sectionally, so that Van Buren would lose a great deal of support in the North by advocating annexation, and would lose support in the South if he did not. By early April it was obvious that the Tyler and Calhoun forces had united to push the Texas issue, and all Van Buren's political enemies were eager to seize on the question to embarrass him. Henry Clay, on his triumphal tour through the South, wrote that he was finding indifference or opposition to annexation in that section and that he did not think it would hurt his chances to oppose

Ibid.
the issue. The upshot was that on April 27, 1844, the National Intelligencer published a letter from Clay indicating his opposition to annexation in the near future, and the Washington Globe, on the same day, published a letter from Van Buren, which beat around the bush a great deal, but unmistakably revealed that Van Buren opposed annexation at that time.

The controversial Texas treaty was almost obscured for a time by the political explosion caused by Van Buren's letter. As Southern delegates pledged to Van Buren began to search for some way to squirm out of their pledge to Van Buren, and the other candidates for the Democratic nomination hurried to get on the Texas bandwagon, the Texas treaty was reported from committee in the Senate. The lines for debate had been drawn by the stand of presidential candidates on the Texas question. At the time, Whigs and Van Buren Democrats had a good majority, so that actually there was little doubt that the treaty would be defeated. However, some still felt that Southern Whigs might desert on the issue. At any rate the Senate had become a great sounding board for the Texas question. Old Bullion, Thomas Hart

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9 Clay to Willie P. Mangum, April 14, 1844, The Papers of Willie P. Mangum, Henry T. Shanks, editor (Raleigh, North Carolina, 1955), IV, 102. The National Intelligencer published throughout April a number of excerpts from newspapers throughout the South opposing annexation.
Benton, scathingly denounced the treaty and particularly the man responsible for making it. Benton urged waiting, and the avoidance of all the unseemly haste to get the treaty ratified. Benton revealed his belief, though not explicitly, that the whole Texas project was suddenly agitated to defeat the treaty in order to give the South an excuse or opportunity to dissolve the Union. Benton then submitted resolutions that an adoption of the treaty would be an adoption of war with Mexico.

The Whigs and Van Buren Democrats made a big issue out of the great hurry of the Democrats to annex Texas. They urged waiting until after the election, so that such an important question would not become involved in partisan politics. The advocates of annexation, however, urged ratification as necessary to keep Texas from falling into British hands, and Texas leaders were attempting to put annexation on a now-or-never basis. Henderson wrote Jones in this vein in late March.

I have said to all that this is the third time that Texas has urged the measure upon the United States; that it is now brought up at the instance of the United States Government, and that it cannot be postponed without finally and forever defeating it. However, the cry for waiting was fairly general over the

\[10\] Congressional Globe, 28th Congress 1st session, p. 537.
\[11\] Henderson to Jones, March 30, 1844, Jones, p. 333.
country. The people considered the Texas question too im-
portant for the Senate alone to decide.

The Senate debated the Texas treaty for two weeks, 
took time out for the Democratic convention, then continued 
to debate until June 9 when the vote was taken. Senators 
McDuffie and Walker urged ratification of the treaty. 
McDuffie placed the matter on sectional grounds and launched 
into a long defense of slavery in his speech on the treaty.
Walker used and summed up his arguments for annexation as 
advanced in his letter of February. Walker's speech was 
also something of a rebuttal of abolitionist arguments that 
annexation would strengthen slavery. Senator Ambrose 
Sevier of Arkansas argued that slavery existed in Texas any-
way, so what difference did it make, as far as the Negro's 
welfare was concerned, if slavery existed in Texas as an 
independent country or as a part of the United States. Sevier had made clear that the real reasons Northerners 
-opposed annexation were not necessarily philanthropical, 
but were political and sectional in nature. Of course, 
abolitionists unrealistically were inclined to argue that 
Texas was on the verge of abolishing slavery, with the

12 Congressional Globe, 28th Congress, 1st session, 
p. 532 ff.

assumption being that annexation would stop the movement toward abolition.

The debate on Texas spilled over into the House of Representatives. Joshua Giddings, fiery abolitionist from Ohio, used the Texas question to make one of his bitter speeches denouncing slavery. C. J. Ingersoll, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, attempted to get a pro-annexation resolution out of committee, but failing to do so, he had published in a Washington newspaper a long pro-annexation report. Even though it was not official, the report had a good deal of influence. Ingersoll, in his report, wrote that it was the will of the people that Texas be annexed. It is difficult to see how he drew this conclusion when a majority of the members of the Foreign Affairs Committee had voted against the resolution.

The vote on the Texas treaty came on June 9, 1844, two weeks after the Democratic convention in Baltimore. Thomas Hart Benton was openly charged with defeating the treaty by his powerful speech against it. Benton's speech may have been influential, but it was probably not decisive. The treaty was defeated by a vote of thirty-five to twenty-six, with nine out of twenty Southern senators present voting


16 *National Intelligencer*, May 5, 1844.
against it, and every Whig senator but one voting against it. After the defeat of the treaty, Benton offered another plan for annexation, which was favored by the moderate Democrats but opposed by the Whigs. Benton's plan called for the formation of one state, not larger than the largest state then in the Union, with the remainder of Texas being organized as the southwest territory, to be divided into free and slave territory according to the terms of the Missouri Compromise. Mexican assent was to be obtained if possible, or if the Senate were willing, it could disregard Mexico. The bill was defeated by a majority of five.

Senator McDuffie also presented a resolution for annexation, which got nowhere. Actually there were two ways in which Texas could be added: annexation could be accomplished by treaty, to be ratified by a two-thirds majority of the Senate, or by joint resolution of both houses of Congress, which required only a simple majority of both houses.

Perhaps more influential in the defeat of the Texas treaty than Benton's speech or Calhoun's letter was the result of the Democratic convention in Baltimore in the last

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18 Ibid., p. 799; *Congressional Globe*, 28th Congress, 1st Session, p. 568.
week of May. Going into the convention, Martin Van Buren had a majority of the delegates pledged to him. However, he did not have a two-thirds majority. Van Buren's stand on the Texas question had lost him a great deal of support in the South. In fact, the Virginia Democracy, ruled by Thomas Ritchie's Shockoe Hill Association, had released its delegates from their pledge to support Van Buren. Almost all the state delegations were in a state of uncertainty. Even Northern Democrats still faithful to Van Buren were fearful that his Texas stand had jeopardized his chances to win, even if he obtained the nomination. Governor James Hammond of South Carolina was talking secession as an alternative to Van Buren's nomination. As the nomination race progressed, the annexation of Texas and the preservation of the union were being linked by South Carolinians. In May several meetings were held in South Carolina and strong resolutions were passed asking for Texas annexation. Throughout the South, Democrats were ardently advocating annexation, which meant opposing Van Buren as the nominee.

19 Paul, p. 128.

20 Ibid., p. 132.

However, the alignment on Texas was not yet completely sectional, nor was it to become so. Although the sectional rift in the Democratic party opened by the Texas issue was wide, and getting wider, the Whigs throughout the South generally stood firm against annexation. In Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee and Virginia, where pro-annexation sentiment was very strong, the Whigs generally subordinated their desire for Texas to political expediency, after Clay took his stand in opposition to annexation. It is true, however, that the Texas question did not find all Whigs united in opposition to annexation, and public men feared the reaction of the Texas question on the Whigs. William Kinney of Richmond, Virginia, wrote in April: "Nothing can defeat us but the Texas question, that I fear will be a fire brand among the Whigs." The Texas controversy was making Whig leaders uncertain as to how they would fare in the coming election.

The Texas controversy was making the choice of the nominee of the Democratic party distinctly uncertain. As the date set for the convention drew near it began to become clear what would be the strategy of Walker, Ingersoll, McDuffie and others who were determined that the convention should nominate a candidate pledged to the annexation of Texas. They would

22Winston, "Annexation and Mississippi Democrats," p. 3.

23William Kinney to Mangum, April 29, 1844, Mangum Papers, IV, 122.
push the adoption of the two-thirds rule in order to block the nomination of Van Buren. Delegates pledged to Van Buren could, without backing down on their pledge to him, still support the adoption of the two-thirds rule. Once the convention became deadlocked, the anti-Van Buren men had hopes of obtaining the nomination of one of the other candidates. Cass, Buchanan, Johnson, or Levi Woodbury of New Hampshire, would be acceptable, since all were on record as favorable to annexation. At the time, there was only one vice-presidential candidate in the race, James K. Polk of Tennessee. Polk had the blessing of old Andrew Jackson; in fact after Van Buren's stand on Texas became known, Jackson concluded that Polk was the best man for the first place on the ticket.

Feelings were intensely bitter by the time the convention met May 27, 1844. The two-thirds rule was adopted the next day, but not without heated and angry arguments, and certainly some promises and bargains. Woodbury and Buchanan were undoubtedly given promises to obtain their support for the two-thirds rule. Too, Northern men may have been promised support for Oregon annexation as well. When the balloting started, Van Buren had a majority on the first ballot as was expected, but did not muster the necessary two thirds. Seven ballots were taken on the afternoon of the 28th, with Van Buren falling behind and Lewis Cass edging

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24 Wiltse, p. 179.
him out. But Cass was still short of the required majority. After the seventh ballot, the convention adjourned and the trading continued behind the scenes. Polk's friends on the Tennessee delegation, Cave Johnson, Gideon Pillow, and Sam Laughlin had already been busy making contacts. The Tennessee delegation was loaded with Cass supporters, but other delegations were more receptive to the idea of Polk for president. On the night of the 28th, the Massachusetts historian and politician, George Bancroft, remembering the name Polk, contacted Pillow and Johnson and asked if Polk's name could be put before the convention. This was the chance for which Polk's managers were waiting. They had decided that Polk's name must not be put forward except by a Northern, and preferably a New England, delegation. That night Pillow contacted many other delegates urging them to switch to Polk. When the Democrats convened on the morning of the 29th, rumors were rife of a stampede. On the first ballot of the morning, the Massachusetts delegation cast its vote for Polk, although no formal nomination had been made for him. The only apparent attempt at a formal nomination for Polk came from Seth Frazer of Pennsylvania who whooped that he cast his votes for "James K. Polk, a boon friend of Old Hickory, and a pure whole-hogged Democrat." On this

25 For a detailed account of events at the convention, see Paul, pp. 154-168.
morning ballot, Cass still led with 114 votes, but Polk polled 44 votes. However, on the next ballot, the ninth of the convention, the New York leader, Benjamin Butler, sorrowfully withdrew Van Buren's name and swung New York's strength to Polk. The bandwagon had started to roll, and Polk swept into the nomination.

In an attempt to placate the Van Buren partisans, the convention nominated Silas Wright, senator from New York, as the vice-presidential candidate, but Wright refused to run on a Texas ticket. Robert Walker brought forward the name of his kinsman, Pennsylvania senator George M. Dallas, and Dallas was quickly nominated in the evening of the 29th.

On the following day the platform committee reported a platform which was particularly clear on Texas and Oregon, but not so clear on other issues. The reannexation of Texas and the reoccupation of Oregon were recommended to the voters. The Van Burenites opposed the Texas plank, but did reluctantly accept it. Actually the convention ended on a note of apparent harmony, with most of the delegates enthusiastic about the ticket. Van Buren supporters privately expressed bitter resentment, but for the moment, sectional rancor appeared to be stilled and the party had a new war cry, "Polk, Dallas, and Texas."

The same day that the Democratic convention met, a Tyler convention met in Baltimore and nominated Tyler on a Texas platform, but Tyler's Texas thunder had been stolen
by the Democrats. A Whig observer wrote: "Poor Tyler is dead. He feels so. They have stolen his theme." 26

Undoubtedly, the nomination of a candidate, other than Tyler, who favored annexation influenced senators to vote against the Texas treaty, for now there could indeed be a referendum on the Texas question. The Democrats were in favor, and the Whigs, who had readily nominated Henry Clay early in May were opposed to immediate annexation.

The defeat of the Texas treaty at the hands of the Senate did not end the administration's attempt to secure annexation, however. The day after the Senate turned down the treaty, President Tyler appealed to the House against the decision of the Senate. He sent to the House of Representatives the treaty and accompanying correspondence with a message urging a joint resolution. However, adjournment of Congress was imminent and the matter was carried over until Congress reconvened. Several times during the following months, Calhoun and Tyler seriously considered calling a special session to attempt to secure a joint resolution effecting annexation. The project was considered due to the continuing fear that Texas might be lost to the United States if immediate action were not taken, but each

26 W. P. Mangum to P. H. Mangum, May 29, 1844, Mangum Papers, IV, 128.

27 Congressional Globe, 28th Congress, 1st session, p. 568.
time the idea was abandoned because of the fear of political repercussions.

As could be expected, there was mixed reaction to the Texas treaty on the part of the British. From some quarters in Great Britain there was opposition to annexation. Some of the reasons had already occurred to Calhoun. He shrewdly deduced that a great part of British opposition was due to commercial interest with slavery at the base. He thought that abolition of slavery in British colonial possessions in the West Indies had put British planters in that area at a disadvantage by giving them higher labor costs. If slavery could be abolished in Texas and in the United States, British planters would be put on an equal footing. Even disregarding slavery, if Texas could be maintained as an independent republic, American expansion would be blocked to some extent. Calhoun knew that Britain was actively working for abolition of slavery in Texas, and abolition brought about by British influence he considered to be derogatory to the interests of not only Southern planters, but the entire Union. However, there were those in England who favored annexation. Some thought it would be to the advantage of England to have Texas added to the Union because it would add to the strength of the free trade bloc in the United States, and a lower tariff was anxiously desired by Great Britain. In May, 1844, the Liverpool Mercury
expressed this opinion in regard to the Texas question: "We cannot afford to alienate the Southern interest and strengthen the advocates of the high tariff by opposing a measure so warmly advocated by the Southern States." At any rate, English opinion was divided on the question, with perhaps a majority opposing annexation, which, incidentally, may have played no small part in swinging many Americans in favor of Polk and annexation.

By mid-June of 1844 the Texas question was being debated pro and con by politicians, the press, and the people. The project might eventually fail, but it was at that time one of the most talked about issues of the day. It still retained some element of its position as a sectional issue, but it had become more accurately by then a political issue. Undoubtedly, the Democratic gamble that expansion sentiment was stronger than sectional interest, was to a large extent responsible. Had the Whigs and Van Buren Democrats had their way, Texas would have remained a sectional issue through the race of 1844, unless the annexationists became strong enough to make Tyler a major contender. It is certain that Texas became a political football, with politicians confusing or obscuring the merits of annexation or non-annexation according to the best interests of their political party.

28 *National Intelligencer*, May 9, 1844. Of course, this Whig newspaper probably printed this excerpt hoping to develop more Northern opposition to annexation.
CHAPTER V
THE ELECTION OF 1844: MANIFEST DESTINY OR SECTIONALISM?

The nomination of James K. Polk as the Democratic candidate for president was thought by many to be the dying gasp of the Democratic party. Many Whigs felt that the Democrats, rather than splinter into numerous factions and break up the party, had grasped at a straw, a one-in-a-million chance, by nominating Polk. In fact, some concluded that the Whigs could not have desired a better candidate to oppose the illustrious Clay. 1

Polk certainly did suffer from a comparison to Henry Clay, who had been well known as a statesman for three decades, but under the circumstances, Polk was probably the best choice the Democratic party could have made. He was enough known to anyone who cared to take the time to look into his record. He had the advantage of not having made many enemies, except among Whig politicians. 2 He could be

1 National Intelligencer, May 30, 1844.

2 Polk had been so thoroughly hated as Speaker of the House of Representatives that his opponents wished to deny him the customary vote of thanks. E. I. McCormac, James K. Polk (Berkeley, California, 1922), p. 251.
represented to the ignorant as favorable to most anything which would please a particular audience. The fact was that Polk was an excellent choice, and many Democrats so realized it. Andrew Jackson, after getting over his initial disappointment at the defection of his friend, Van Buren, concluded that Polk was the best choice. Even the Washington Spectator joined in applauding the choice by writing:

The great mass of the people wanted a man pure in morals, sound in political principles, and in favor of the immediate annexation of Texas, and such they have in James K. Polk. He is a consistent and sound politician, of the Jeffersonian Democratic school; talented, firm and discreet. 3

Thomas Hart Benton, although fuming about alleged dirty work at the convention, found a way to support the candidate. He still maintained that the convention leaders plotted against Van Buren, but that Polk and Dallas were innocent of any conniving. Therefore, he could support the Democratic ticket. Benton had consistently desired the annexation of Texas and only objected to the manner in which it was to be effected in the Texas treaty. Therefore, he had no qualms about supporting annexation.

Van Buren Democrats were disappointed and bitter, but most of them fell into line and supported Polk, although some still rejected the annexation of Texas. Pennsylvania's

high tariff Democrats were a bit uneasy about Polk's views on the tariff, but his Kane letter was so interpreted as to allow them to support Polk with a clear conscience and whole-heartedly combat Whig claims that Polk was a free trader. It is true, however, that the cry of "Who is James K. Polk?" became an effective campaign cry for the Whigs by attaching the stigma of nonentity to Polk, and there were some Democrats who privately voiced the same question. William C. Preston, writing from Columbia, South Carolina, to J. J. Crittenden said: "The Democrats here cry hurra for Polk in the street and come round to ask me who the devil he is."  

Even though the party was rather badly divided on some basic issues and some Democrats did not know who their candidate was, the Democracy quickly closed ranks and began working for the election of their candidate.

A large part of the reason for the subsequent success of the Democratic party was the organization of the campaign on a regional basis with arguments devised for particular sections. In the North and Northeast Texas and Oregon were linked, but the Texas question was played down and the Oregon question

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4 McCormac, p. 261.

was emphasized. Also, Polk was represented as a man who favored a tariff for revenue, which would give incidental aid to a large portion of American industry. When the Texas question had to be faced in the North, Walker's arguments for annexation on the basis of the broad needs of the nation were utilized. In the West and the South the Texas and Oregon plank in the Democratic platform was made the paramount one by the Democrats, and Polk was represented as favoring a tariff for revenue only.

Robert J. Walker was again in the forefront in devising the strategy used by the Democrats in the 1844 election. Walker wrote Polk advising the Democratic nominee how to phrase his views on the tariff. Walker also wrote an inflammatory pamphlet entitled *The South in Danger*. The pamphlet was aimed at recruiting Southern votes, and warned Southerners that Clay's election would put the Northern abolitionists in control of the government, and the South would be ruined.

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7 It may be noted, however, that in Mississippi the addresses of the state central committee of the Democratic party made bare allusions to Texas, but devoted big arguments to the national bank, tariff, internal improvements, and distribution issues. Winston, "Annexation and the Mississippi Democrats," p. 4. This fact was probably due to the feeling that Mississippians needed no selling on the Texas issue.

As Southern Democrats appealed to sectional feelings to garner votes, their cohorts in the North attempted to quiet all sectional feelings. In reality Northern Democrats were becoming more and more concerned about slavery and the increasing effect of the slavery question on Northern voters. The New York Evening Post supported the Democratic candidates, but objected to the attempt to annex Texas and cited several reasons. Prominent among the reasons was that the paper opposed any measure which would spread slavery. On the other hand, many Northern Democrats were alarmed over the spread of abolitionism. One of them predicted that "... Before one year is over, 1/4 of our friends will be drawn to the abolition ranks, and the next contest for the presidency will be a great Sectional War between the North and South." Prompted a great deal by the defeat of Van Buren in the race for the presidential nomination, but still expressive of Northern discontent was Preston King's analysis of the Texas and slavery issues. King wrote:

The South does not want Texas without slavery—I would take Texas tonight without slavery. ... Calhoun has designedly put slavery in the foreground for mischief. ... One year ago I had great confidence in

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9 National Intelligencer, June 27, 1844.

Southern faith and Southern honor, now I have none. Slavery was fast becoming the real basis for dissension within Democratic ranks, even though it was probably not yet recognized as such by most observers.

While Northern Democrats were deploring the expected use of Texas annexation to extend slavery, a strong Southern resistance movement was being born in South Carolina. To Southern extremists the rejection of the Texas treaty in June was illustrative of the effect of abolitionist propaganda and Northern jealousy. Public meetings were held in several South Carolina counties immediately following the rejection of the annexation treaty in the Senate. Fiery resolutions emanated from these meetings. "We believe the very existence of this blood-bought and blood-cemented Union will be determined by it the Texas question."

In another resolution regarding the Texas treaty, the growing rift between the North and South is well illustrated.

... Its final rejection is an evidence of that increasing hostility to the institutions of the South which has already shaken the confidence of our people in the patriotism and fidelity of our Northern brethren, and which may render it necessary for us (in the words of our own Declaration of Independence) "to provide new guards for our future security."

11 King to Flagg, December 21, 1844, *ibid.*

12 *National Intelligencer*, June 19, 1844.

The annexation of Texas and the preservation of the Union were being linked by Southern extremists. In fact, a full fledged disunion movement was developing in South Carolina, a movement based on the rejection of the Texas treaty and the failure of Congress to lower the tariff in the previous session. In late June, 1844, Robert Barnwell Rhett, fiery Southern editor and congressman from South Carolina, issued an address to his constituents advocating the call of an all Southern convention, or at least a state convention, to devise ways and means of annexing Texas and protecting the South from the tariff. This was the seed of the famous Bluffton movement. July 31, at a dinner in Bluffton, South Carolina, the disunion movement crystallized; it came out in the open. South Carolina extremists revealed that they actually had no hope in a convention or the election of Polk. They felt that secession or nullification was the only remedy for the South. \(^{14}\) It must be emphasized that this was a small minority group, but a very powerful one.

Some of the leaders insisted that any move toward secession or nullification must be taken by the entire South. \(^{15}\)


Indeed, such had been the basis for Rhett's suggestion for an all Southern convention to consider issues he thought vital to the continued existence of the South. Other leaders felt that South Carolina must take the lead in any move.

The principal drawback however, was that many felt that South Carolina was not yet ready for secession. In fact John C. Calhoun, the acknowledged leader of South Carolina and to some extent of the whole South, was opposed to the resistance movement in that state. At the time, Calhoun was being accused by his many enemies of being the father of the Bluffton movement and at the bottom of a widespread disunion movement despite constant denials by the Spectator. Actually, Calhoun felt that the prospects for the success of state-rights principles would be better than they had been for some time if Polk could be elected, and any move toward disunion on the part of the South would hurt Polk's chances. Therefore, Calhoun moved quickly to throw his whole weight against the resistance movement. Even before the meeting at Bluffton on the last day of July, Calhoun worked through his conservative friends in South Carolina to put pressure on the disunionists. Through most of the month of August the state seethed with disunion activity. Then in early September

16 Ibid., p. 70.

Calhoun returned to South Carolina, having extracted from Polk positive assurances on the tariff and the Texas question which could be used to quiet the extremists. The word quickly got around that Polk had pledged that the principles of the tariff compromise of 1833 would be restored, that the government would be reformed on state-rights principles, and that nothing would stand in the way of Texas annexation. By the last of September the disunion movement was halted, and extremist action in the near future was rendered unlikely when Calhoun partisans won a majority in the South Carolina legislature and the rabid disunionist candidate for governor, Whitemarsh Seabrook, was defeated in the governor's race.

Other Southern Democrats were as anxious as Calhoun to quiet all evidences of disunion movements during the election campaign. "Texas or disunion" had aroused a response which had to be quieted because the Whigs were charging Democrats with being bent on dissolving the Union. When the Bluffton extremists were considering calling a Southern convention, Thomas Ritchie blocked the move to have the convention meet in Richmond. When the choice devolved on Nashville, a public meeting was held in that city and resolutions were drawn up protesting against "the desecration of the soil of

18 Wiltse, pp. 190-191.
19 Russell, p. 69.
tennsee by having any convention held there to hatch
 treason against the Union." It is quite apparent that the
 strong anti-secession movement in evidence in the summer and
 fall of 1844 was motivated largely by political considera-
 tions.

 Polk and his campaign managers as well as practically
 all leading Democrats, realized that in order to win the
 election, all the divergent groups within the party had to
 be placated. Northern Democrats were promised incidental
 aid and a tariff for revenue with the emphasis on aid, while
 the latter part of the phrase was emphasized for the benefit
 of Southern Democrats. Texas annexation was pushed in the
 South, while in the North the reoccupation of Oregon was
 stressed. In the West the magic words were reannexation of
 Texas and the reoccupation of Oregon all the way up to
 54° 40'. "Fifty-four forty or fight" was the phrase coined
 to satisfy the jingoistic element of the country.

 While the Democrats were debating the issues on a
 regional basis, the Whigs were doing the same thing. In the
 South they leveled their guns on the Texas issue. They de-
 nounced the Democrats for dragging out the slavery issue in
 relation to annexation, and accused them of doing so to cover

 20 Benton, II, 617.
21 Southern Whigs continued to oppose the annexation of Texas, citing as drawbacks the fact that the addition of Texas would drain the older Southern states of some of their best citizens and a large amount of capital. They also maintained that Texas would increase United States cotton production and drive prices down. In addition the Whigs maintained that annexation, which was so vociferously opposed by abolitionists, would stimulate them to further activity against slavery. These were the sectional arguments against annexation which were pushed mostly in the South, but the Whigs used other arguments against annexation which were not pitched on a sectional basis. The old argument that the addition of Texas would make the Union large and unwieldy and even more subject to sectional problems was utilized frequently during the campaign. The constitutionality of annexing Texas was questioned by the Whigs. 23 The Whigs also attempted to persuade the


23 The Democrats had tried to obviate constitutional arguments by emphasizing the reannexation angle, based on the assumption that Texas had belonged to the United States until 1819.
people that the assumption of the Texas national debt would raise taxes a great deal, and the benefits would go to speculators in Texas land and scrip. The Whigs continually harped on the speculation angle, particularly in the North. As the Columbus Enquirer asserted: "The Whigs want it distinctly understood that they will not jeopardize the success of Henry Clay to advance the pecuniary interests of any set of speculators, either in this country or elsewhere." The Whigs also denied that Texas "was about to jump into the arms of Great Britain," and denounced claims that Texas was about to be taken by England as a speculators' attempt to alarm the country.

Perhaps the most potent argument against annexation was based on the continued existence of the threat of war with Mexico if Texas were annexed. It was pointed out by the Whigs that Mexico was more determined than ever to resist any attempt to annex Texas. A large part of the discussions in the Mexican congress meeting in the spring of 1844 had been taken up by the Texas problem, and relations between the United States and Mexico were still strained.

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24 Cited in National Intelligencer, June 5, 1844. The speculation in Texas lands and scrip was also cited by Northern radical Democrats as a reason for their opposition to annexation.

25 Ibid., June 21, 1844.

26 Ibid.
These were the arguments used by the Whig party in general in the campaign of 1844. Actually, many Southern Whigs were in a dilemma; they wanted Texas annexed, but they also wanted Clay elected. As the race progressed it began to appear to Whig leaders, as some of them had earlier feared, that there might be some breaking of the ranks of the party in the South, due to the Texas annexation issue. Henry Clay began to attempt to clarify his stand on annexation to hold would-be bolters in line.

The Whigs could have drawn election support to a larger extent from the growing anti-slavery element in the North, if Henry Clay had not equivocated on the Texas issue. Clay, so confident in the spring that opposition to annexation would not hurt him, by mid-summer grew alarmed at the growing sentiment in the South for the annexation of Texas. As a result, Clay began to back down from his previous firm stand against annexation. In an attempt to explain to Southerners that he was not opposed to the addition of Texas, but to immediate annexation, Clay lost the votes of a block of the anti-slavery element. He attempted to straddle the fence, and lost the confidence of those who were adamant in opposition to admitting Texas to the Union, without gaining the confidence of those who desired annexation. The Whigs thereby lost the opportunity to push another argument against annexation, which would have appealed to many Northern voters, the
argument that the admission of Texas would expand and aid slavery. As it was, James Birney, the presidential candidate of the Liberty party, undoubtedly received many normally Whig votes, for the Liberty party was unequivocally opposed to annexation. Of course, the Whig leadership knew that opposition to annexation on an anti-slavery basis would have been disastrous to the party's chances in the South.

With the advantage of hindsight, it can be seen that it would probably have been to the advantage of Clay and the Whigs to have pushed the anti-slavery arguments in opposition to annexation, for Clay did not carry enough Southern states to offset the loss of New York, and he might have carried North Carolina in spite of such a stand.

While Clay was hurting the cause of the Whig party by writing letters in July and August, the Democratic party was picking up strength. Van Buren was whipping the New York Democrats into line and Calhoun was swinging South Carolina Democrats squarely behind Polk. At the same time, President Tyler was being pressured to withdraw from the race and throw his scattered following to Polk. Walker, already in Tyler's confidence, called on Tyler in early July and arranged the terms for the President's withdrawal. Tyler's followers were to be accepted as bona fide Democrats as far as patronage was concerned, and the Globe, as well as other Democratic
papers were to cease their scurrilous attacks on the administration. Andrew Jackson was given the task of seeing that the terms were carried out. To his old friend, Francis P. Blair, editor of the Globe, Jackson dispatched a letter ordering him to "support the cause of Polk and Dallas and let Tyler alone." Tyler was finally convinced that his withdrawal would be in the best interests of the country and of his friends, and on August 20, he withdrew from the race. Thus, the Democrats were rapidly gaining in strength as the November election neared.

The Texas question by the fall of 1844 had become almost entirely a matter of party politics rather than a sectional question. Two examples will suffice to illustrate this fact. In South Carolina, Waddy Thompson, former minister to Mexico, and a Whig, vociferously opposed the annexation of Texas in the 1844 campaign. Five years before, in 1839, Thompson had made an extremely fiery sectional speech in the House of Representatives, in which he had demanded annexation for the safety of the South in the Union. Thompson justified his opposition to annexation

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27 Wiltse, p. 183.

28 Jackson to Blair, July 26, 1844, Correspondence of Jackson, VI, 304-305.

29 Madisonian, August 20, 1844, cited in Wiltse, p. 183.

on the grounds that annexation would stimulate the zeal of abolitionists in the North. Another example in which political loyalty proved stronger than sectional loyalty is found in the activities of the Massachusetts locofocos. The same Massachusetts radicals who had been instrumental in passing strong anti-Texas resolutions in the Massachusetts legislature a short time before, were the first to cast their ballots for Polk in the Democratic convention. They continued to support James K. Polk, and of course, tacitly, Texas annexation, throughout the election campaign. In fact one of them, George Bancroft, became a member of Polk's cabinet.

It is not to be concluded, however, that all Democrats were united and in perfect harmony in the 1844 election. Outwardly, there was a united party, but the divisive effect of the Texas question's defeat of Van Buren in the convention was deep and lasting. Van Buren and his partisans worked for Polk's election for the sake of their power in the state of New York, but in four short years, Van Buren and his friends were to be at odds with the Democratic party, and in fact, Van Buren was to be the candidate of a newly organized anti-slavery party. Northern Democrats were distinctly dissatisfied with their position within the party.

31 National Intelligencer, June 29, 1844.
With the Democrats rapidly surging to the front as the election date neared, many observers felt that the election would turn on the Texas question, despite the fact that there were other issues in the campaign. A Georgia Whig wrote the president of the Senate in late July that he thought Georgia would go to Clay. The only difficulty was the Texas question. Discounting the usual optimistic predictions of party hopefuls, it was clear that the election was going to be close in practically every state.

There was doubt as to the outcome of the election until the last returns from the last state were in, and the election was very close in every state except South Carolina. There was a lapse of a few days before the outcome was known, because a single date for elections had not then been set. The elections in each state were held in November, but not on the same day. The election was extremely close; in some states the margin of victory was less than 500 votes, and the total popular vote given Polk was 1,337,000 to 1,299,000 for Clay. In the electoral college Polk's majority was larger, 170 to 105 electoral votes.

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32 James E. Harvey to Mangum, July 23, 1844, Mangum Papers, IV, 160.
34 Wiltse, p. 186.
An analysis of the voting pattern can be useful but also misleading in determining the influence of the Texas question in the 1844 election. Since it is almost impossible to assess the relative importance of the many factors which influence elections. Despite this fact some conclusions can be drawn. With the exception of Tennessee and North Carolina, Polk carried the entire South. He carried New York and other scattered Northern states as well. Most historians have been inclined to assign New York as the pivotal state in the election, and to conclude that Clay's equivocation on the Texas question lost New York for him by causing a few thousand normally Whig voters to switch to Birney. It is possible that this was the case, for the popular vote in New York was: Polk, 237,588; Clay, 232,482; Birney, 15,812. It may be pointed out that it is impossible to ascertain whether Clay's fence-straddling actually cost him the election, for most of these voters might have voted for Birney regardless of Clay's stand on the Texas question. However, it is certain that New York's thirty-six electoral votes would have given the election to Clay and the Whigs, and had a few thousand of the votes given to Birney gone to Clay, he would have won the election. The Texas question might have fared very differently had this been the case.

Rives, II, 649.
There is no way to accurately assess the importance of the Texas question in the election of 1844. It is true that the issues between the two parties were practically the same as in 1840 with the exception of the Texas and Oregon plank in the Democratic platform. In both elections the tariff, national bank, internal improvements, and distribution were prominent issues. In the 1840 election the Whigs won in a landslide and carried many Southern states, but the personalities involved were much different, and by 1844 the country was emerging from the depression, so that conditions were not similar. Therefore, it may not be safe to conclude that their stand on Texas and Oregon won for Polk and the Democrats. On the other hand, the spirit of expansion was a factor which complicates the picture. Manifest destiny, although the term was not yet in common use, was a powerful force in the election. It appears that the Democrats were correct in betting that the forces of expansion were stronger than the forces of sectionalism, when they nominated Polk and adopted the cry of reannexation of Texas and reoccupation of Oregon. The growing strength of the west, where expansion

36 The popular vote, as far as it could be registered, was almost evenly divided for or against annexation in terms of the declaration of the candidates. For example, Clay, against immediate annexation and Birney, against annexation, totaled 1,361,362 votes, while Polk for immediate annexation received 1,377,243 votes. Edward Stanwood, *A History of the Presidency* (New York, 1898), I, 223.
sentiment was strongest, materially aided in the Democratic victory. If it can be argued that the election turned on the Texas and Oregon questions, it was not due to sectional allegiances, but to a fast awakening expansionist sentiment among the rank and file west of the Appalachians.

Of some note in assessing the importance of the Texas question in the election of 1844 was the decisive Democratic victory in the congressional elections. In the House of Representatives the Democrats obtained a majority of 120 to 72. Of course, this majority may have been won because of the people's reaction against the previous administration in which little was accomplished. However, it is true that the Democratic party was clearly pledged to the reannexation of Texas and reoccupation of Oregon and the Whig party was not. So the majority won by the Democrats reflected an approval of the Democratic expansion program.

Some credit for winning the election must be given the Texas question, but a great deal of credit must also be given to Polk, his political advisors, and his campaign managers. Andrew Jackson's influence was a great factor in keeping the increasingly sectionally divided Democratic party working together long enough to win. Hope for the spoils of

37 Rives, II, 650, based on the vote for Speaker when the 29th Congress organized.
office and the regionally conducted campaign managed by Walker were also effective in holding the party in line and winning the election.

It was not long until many of the factors which had held the party together in 1844 were either inoperative or declining in influence, and the election-year unity of the Democratic party began to disappear. A few months after the election, Andrew Jackson died, and thus passed from the scene the dominating personality in the development and functioning of the Democracy. Cautious Polk tried to steer a neutral course between the Northern locofocos and Calhoun partisans, but found it particularly difficult, once the Mexican war was underway. Spoils of office, an important factor in election year unity, became less a unifying force once offices were distributed. Other issues and other conditions arose to trouble the once strongly unified Democracy. The very force of manifest destiny, so influential in winning the election for the Democrats, soon created a situation in which extremists of both wings of the party were even further divided.

The Texas question, however, was to be decided by the election of 1844, and the Tyler administration was quick to interpret the Democratic victory as a mandate for annexation. With the date for the convening of the second session of the twenty-eighth Congress approaching, it appeared that the long fight for annexation was about to be ended successfully.
CHAPTER VI

THE TRIUMPH OF MANIFEST DESTINY

When the twenty-eighth Congress convened for the second session in December, 1844, President Tyler in his annual message to Congress asked for a joint resolution effecting the annexation of Texas to the United States. Tyler based his appeal on the submission of the question of annexation to the electorate and their approval in the form of the election of James K. Polk as president. Of course, Tyler also asked for a joint resolution on the basis of the United States' need for Texas.

It was impossible to get an annexation treaty ratified by two thirds of the Senate, but the prospect was considered good for the passage of a joint resolution for annexation. It was certain that the prospect for annexation was brighter than it had ever been, but there was still a great deal of opposition, and the success of the measure was still considered doubtful. The factor which made the passage of such a resolution at all doubtful was the tendency of Van Buren and Benton Democrats in Congress to join the expected

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1 Congressional Globe, 28th Congress, 2nd session, p. 5.
Northern Whig and anti-slavery opponents of annexation. Most Southern Whigs were expected to vote for annexation if it could be accomplished in a manner suitable to them, for all Southerners were alarmed to some extent by the repeal, at the beginning of the session, of the twenty-first rule in the House, or the so-called "gag rule" barring debate on slavery or the receipt of petitions having anything to do with slavery. Further indication that there was still a great deal of opposition to annexation were the large numbers of petitions protesting against the annexation of Texas which continued to pour into Congress. However, there were also many petitions asking for the immediate annexation of Texas which continued to pour into Congress, but the former were introduced in greater numbers.

The Texas question was again formally introduced for action in the House of Representatives early in the session by C. J. Ingersoll, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations. Ingersoll presented the report of the committee in the form of a resolution providing for annexation with certain specified conditions. This resolution would have effected annexation on practically the same terms as the Tyler treaty of annexation. It provided for immediate annexation, the assumption of the Texas debt, the receipt of

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all public lands in Texas, and approval of annexation by the citizens of Texas. After Ingersoll introduced the resolution, Robert Winthrop of Massachusetts rose to protest that the minority of Ingersoll's committee was opposed to annexation in any form, on the grounds that it would bring on a war and would aid slavery.  

Ingersoll led off the debate on the Texas question, January 3, 1845, with an appeal to the House to disregard sectional arguments and sectional considerations, and to consider the Texas issue in the light of the best interests of the nation, which he felt would insure the passage of the resolution before the House. The question was debated at some length in the House throughout the following three weeks, with numerous amendments and substitute resolutions presented by various representatives. In fact, Garrett Davis of Kentucky, facetiously tried to introduce a resolution that the United States be annexed to Texas, but he was ruled out of order by the Speaker. One of the most often opposed features of the Ingersoll resolution was the provision for the assumption of the Texas debt. Alexander Stephens of Georgia also wanted the position of slavery in Texas specifically defined.

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4 Ibid., p. 27.  
5 Ibid., pp. 85-88.  
6 Ibid., p. 173.
The resolution, as finally passed by the House, was primarily the product of amendments by Milton Brown, Tennessee representative, and Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois. The annexation resolution was finally passed January 25, 1845, by a vote of 120 to 98. The division on the question was not strictly sectional nor partisan; a few Northern Democrats voted against the measure, while a few Southern Whigs voted for it, although Democrats were chiefly responsible for the passage of the resolution.

The House resolution provided that Texas would be admitted as a state, that the United States must adjust Texas boundary disputes with other countries, and that a Texas state constitution must be submitted to Congress by January 1, 1846. Texas was allowed to keep all her public funds, obligations due, and her public lands as well as her public debt; the resolution was emphatic that the Texas debt was in no case to become a liability of the United States. It was provided that with sufficient population and the consent of Texas, four additional states might be made of Texas at any future date. It also provided that any state lying north of 36° 30" must have slavery prohibited. The main difference between the resolution as passed by the House and the defeated Texas treaty was the refusal to assume the Texas debt and the addition of the four-state provision.

7 Ibid., p. 194.
In the Senate, the House resolution was referred to
the Committee on Foreign Affairs, headed by Senator Archer,
of Virginia. The committee shortly reported, recommending
the rejection of the House resolution and the tabling of
all petitions and bills presented in the Senate pertaining
to the annexation of Texas. During the following two weeks
the Senate debated the Texas question at length, bringing
out all the old arguments for and against annexation, and
developing some new ones. Actually, the opponents of an-
nexation resorted chiefly to attacking the method of ef-
fecting annexation by joint resolution as unconstitutional.
They contended that there was only one constitutional means
of effecting the project and that way was by a treaty rati-
fied by a two-thirds majority of the Senate, which they
knew was impossible of attainment. Senator Levi Woodbury of
New Hampshire appealed for annexation for a new reason. He
asked the Senate to pass a joint resolution in order that
the old battle-scarred veteran, Andrew Jackson, slowly dy-
ing at the Hermitage, might see the annexation of Texas ac-
complished. Also, the speculation argument was again
brought up in the Senate. Senator Benton presented several

\[8^8\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. } 271. \text{ Benton had earlier presented his plan for annexation which he had introduced in the previous session of Congress. See Chapter IV, page 80.} \]

\[9^9\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. } 300. \]
times, as he had in the previous session, the following resolution:

Resolved, That the Committee on Foreign Affairs be instructed to inquire whether any provisions are necessary, in providing for the annexation of Texas, to protect the United States from speculating operations in Texas lands or scrip; and whether any persons employed by the government are connected with such speculations. 10

As far as can be ascertained nothing ever came of the Benton resolutions.

As the debate on Texas progressed, Benton became silent. There were heard none of his long-winded, statistic-studded speeches on the Texas question, for Benton had decided to support any reasonable plan for annexation. Probably, president-elect Polk, who arrived in Washington on February 13, had something to do with quieting Benton, and also in swinging enough Senators in line to pass a joint resolution. Also, the Missouri legislature had requested by resolution that representatives from that state support annexation. 11 At any rate, Benton had even earlier begun to retreat from his stand in opposition to annexation, and on February 5 he introduced a plan for the addition of a state to be called Texas, of prescribed boundaries and size,

10 Ibid., p. 43.

to be made from a portion of the republic of Texas with the remainder to be called the southwest territory. In this proposal, unlike his earlier plan, he did not insist on obtaining the consent of Mexico before annexation could be consummated. The measure was to become effective as soon as Texas and the United States agreed on the terms. Benton's bill appeared to have a good deal of support, but was irreconcilable with the House resolution, until Robert J. Walker performed his last service for Texas annexation by offering a compromise resolution enabling the executive to choose between either Benton's plan or the House resolution.

The vote was still extremely close in the Senate, but in the evening of February 27, the Senate approved the compromise measure by a vote of twenty-seven to twenty-five. Benton supported the measure, and is credited with swinging at least six senators into line on the vote. The vote in the Senate followed party lines more closely than in the House, although three Whigs crossed the line to vote with the Democrats in approving the resolution.

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12 Smith, The Annexation of Texas, p. 343. Smith gives an exhaustive account of all the numerous proposals presented in both houses.

13 Jordan, p. 371.

14 Smith, "Benton," p. 800.
On the following day the compromise measure was submitted to the House of Representatives. The Speaker gave the matter precedence and narrowly limited debate. The debate waxed hot, but there was never any doubt of the passage of the bill. On February 28, the House accepted the Senate amendment by a vote of 132 to 76. The following day, March 1, 1845, President John Tyler signed the joint resolution of annexation, climaxing a move begun eight years before. Two days later, Tyler dispatched envoys to Texas to inform the Texas government of the passage of the annexation resolution.

Meanwhile, in Texas, Anson Jones, President of the Republic, was working to assure Texans of a choice between annexation and independence without fear of Mexican invasion. In fact, Jones, working through British and French diplomats, secured in late May, assurance from Mexico that she would recognize Texas independence, provided Texas rejected annexation to the United States. Texas independence was also to be guaranteed by Great Britain and France. However, the special session of the Texas Congress, called by Jones to meet on June 16, gave little thought to continued independence. They rejected unanimously the Anglo-French treaty and passed resolutions definitely approving

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15 Congressional Globe, 28th Congress, 2nd session, p. 372.
annexation. The Texas Congress also approved Jones' calling of a convention of the people to meet July 4 to vote on annexation.

In spite of the fact that the Texas government was dissatisfied with the United States' refusal to assume the Texas debt, the people were generally enthusiastic about annexation. The only organized opposition to annexation in Texas came from land speculators who probably feared that contracts granted them by the republic might not be validated by the United States. On the other hand, however, the historian of the financial aspects of annexation concluded that the project to annex Texas to the Union originated among financially interested parties in Texas and the United States and was carefully nurtured by them as they turned political forces to their advantage. Certainly it cannot be denied that many speculators were found among those most ardently in favor of expansion, but how much influence they had on the Texas question is difficult to determine.

The Texas convention met on July 4, and quickly passed an ordinance accepting annexation under the terms of the House resolution. The convention then turned to the task of writing a constitution, and by the last of August had

16 Louis J. Wortham, *A History of Texas from Wilderness to Commonwealth* (Fort Worth, 1924), IV, 202-203.

finished the project. The Texas constitution was ratified in the state in October and laid before the American Congress in December. The climax, which was actually something of an anti-climax, came on December 29, 1845, when the United States Congress formally accepted Texas into the Union.

Mexico early began to protest annexation. Immediately after Tyler signed the joint resolution, the Mexican minister in Washington, Juan Almonte, demanded his passport, and three weeks later Mexico severed all diplomatic relations with the United States. In a little more than a year the United States and Mexico were to be at war. However, it was not Texas annexation, in itself, which brought on the war; it was the American desire for California and New Mexico which really brought on the conflict. Manifest destiny had produced its consequence.

Despite the fact that manifest destiny was largely responsible for the Mexican War, it was impossible for Northern anti-slavery forces to believe that the South, by its insistence on annexing Texas, and desire for more slave territory, had not caused the war. In reality, some of the strongest Southern sectionalists, such as Robert B. Rhett and John C. Calhoun, opposed the war because it would

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18 Wortham, IV, 206-207.

19 Ibid., p. 189.
hasten the trend toward consolidation of the power of the central government, and serve as a blow to state-rights. It is true that the war was more popular in the South than in the North and Northeast, but it was in the West that the war was most popular, a factor which can be attributed to expansionism, rather than to sectionalism.

Northern Democrats were embarrassed by the beginning of the Mexican War, and the passage in 1846 of the Walker tariff, a step toward free trade. The Walker tariff passed the Senate by the margin of the votes of the two new Texas senators. The sectional implications of this were obvious to many Northerners. It appeared that some of the wildest predictions made by the anti-slavery element were about to be realized. They had claimed that the United States would be involved in a whole series of foreign wars and that the annexation of Texas would set off a chain of conquests, and the United States would eventually find itself in possession of all Mexico, Cuba, and even Central America. Then the Union would find slavery even more firmly fastened on the country, and the slaveholders would forever control the government to their advantage, and would ruin the Northern section of the country.


Not only were Northern Democrats alarmed at the passage of the Walker tariff and the start of the Mexican War, but they felt that the Polk administration let Northerners down by compromising the Oregon question, instead of insisting on all of Oregon up to $54^\circ 40'$. Polk had insisted on all of Texas to the Rio Grande, even though war was the result. To many more Northerners than ever before, the course of events began to lend color to abolitionist charges that the plan to annex Texas was a vast Southern plot to get more pens to cram with slaves by involving the United States in a war for the conquest of Southern lands. It was this feeling, more than anything else, which led Northerners to begin to insist on prescribing limits on the spread of slavery, which in turn evoked fiery Southern response. It was not, of course, the Texas question and the consequent Mexican war which basically decided the subsequent Northern course, but the basic economic and social difference and growing mutual distrust between the two sections. The Texas question was, however, for eight years one of the large factors in developing jealousy and distrust between the North and South. It was a constant source of irritation between the sections.

The Texas question was also responsible to some extent, for the growing rift within the Democratic party, a rift which was indicative of the growing bitter sectionalism
of the country. It was a Democratic congressman, young David Wilmot of Pennsylvania, who formally led off the Northern attempt to limit the growth of slavery in the expansionist movement of the next few years. When Wilmot presented his proviso that there should be "neither slavery nor involuntary servitude" in any territory acquired from Mexico, it was indicative of the deep rift in the Democratic party developed by the Texas question and the war with Mexico. The introduction of the Wilmot Proviso, which later passed in the House, but not the Senate, was similar to waving a red flag in the faces of Southerners. The fact was, that by 1848, Northern Democrats were well on their way to becoming independent, despite the fact that the Democratic party remained an intersectional party until the Civil War.

In fact as James Buchanan reflected a few years later:

I deplore the fatal effects of the dissensions which have arisen in the glorious old Democratic party, at the head of which once stood the noblest Roman of them all . . . . The Texas question was the Grecian horse that entered our camp.

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23 Craven, p. 35.

Buchanan was not alone in deploiring the divisive effect of the Texas question. Old John Quincy Adams, staunch opponent of annexation to the very end, considered the annexation of Texas to be the "heaviest calamity" which ever befell him or his country.25

In retrospect it is easy to see why Northerners regarded the project to annex Texas as a Southern plot to extend slavery, and why historians long agreed with them. The annexation of Texas, the outbreak of the Mexican War, the passage of the Walker tariff, and the compromise of the Oregon question led Northerners to believe that the South was expanding its power, and at the expense of the North. On the other hand, although it is true that there were those Southerners who desired annexation for sectional reasons, it is a certainty that Texas annexation was finally accomplished as a result of the spirit of expansion. Indeed from the beginning, the project to annex Texas had a certain degree of manifest destiny surrounding it.

It was only after the anti-slavery forces made opposition to annexation a sectional question, that Texas became a point of contention between the North and South, and as already pointed out, the emphasis on annexation for sectional reasons by fiery Southern legislators in 1836 and 1837 largely provoked the anti-slavery opposition.

25 Adams, Memoirs, XII, 173.
In the final analysis, in the light of all evidence, it cannot be argued that the Texas question caused the division of the country into bitterly irreconcilable groups; that was done by other more general and more difficult to assess forces. The Texas question did, however, serve as an important source of friction between the North and South on the eve of the division of the country into irreconcilable groups. Too, the annexation of Texas gave the expansionists an opportunity to provoke a war with Mexico in which great territorial gains were made, but at the further expense of national unity, for rather quickly the addition of new territory brought to the forefront the question of congressional power over slavery in the territories of the United States. It was in the controversy over this issue that the sectional lines were irrevocably drawn, whatever the causes, and despite the fact that there was a ten-year truce period before the sections resorted to the force of arms.

The Texas question, once it was resolved by annexation, was lost in the shuffle of the larger controversy over slavery and its expansion, but the Texas question remains as one of the important symptoms of a country growing sick, with mutual jealousy, distrust, and hatred between two large sections within. The disease of jealousy and hatred, the product of sectionalism, eventually culminated in violent combat to resolve the question of the future course of the country.
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